

**ONLINE COLLABORATIVE CONSUMPTION:
EXPLORING MEANINGS, MOTIVATIONS, COSTS, AND BENEFITS**

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of the experience of online collaborative consumption. Collaborative consumption encompasses the sharing, renting, or swapping of goods, information, and resources. This form of consumption is being reinvented as a result of the Internet. The specific research questions of this study were: (1) What is the nature of the lived experiences of collaborative consumers? (2) Who are collaborative consumers? (3) What motivates/deters engagement in collaborative consumption? (4) What criteria are used to assess collaborative consumption opportunities? (5) What limitations exist concerning the growth of collaborative consumption? (6) What does being an active collaborative consumer mean to these individuals? (7) How has participation in collaborative consumption impacted views or behaviors concerning consumption in general?

This study was conducted in three different collaborative consumption contexts: product service system, redistribution market, and collaborative lifestyle, to gain a holistic understanding of collaborative consumption. Using a phenomenological approach, 30 collaborative consumers participated in in-depth interviews. A range of motivations, benefits, costs, and meanings associated with collaborative consumption were revealed. Participants' primary motive to consume collaboratively was economic (e.g., to save and earn money), followed by social (e.g., to give or gain support), functional (e.g., reduce clutter), environmental, and personal (e.g., keep up with fashion trends) motivations. The majority of participants indicated that social benefits (i.e., forming relationships, socializing) were the most important benefits of collaborative consumption. The

collaborative consumption website became a venue for participants to not only share possessions but also their knowledge, ideas, and concerns. Several participants identified trust concerns associated with collaborative consumption. To build trust, online reputation (e.g., reviews) was a significant criterion on which participants relied. A range of meanings for collaborative consumption emerged from personal (e.g., removing clutter, freedom) to broader meanings (e.g., community building, fostering social responsibility). Participation in collaborative consumption impacted changes in views and behaviors. Participants became sensitive to discounts and felt uncomfortable buying things new. Participants also shared that they increased or shifted to buying environmentally friendly or sustainable products. Discussion of the findings, limitations, and suggestions for future research were also provided.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with an overview of the context and background that framed the study. Following this overview is the statement of purpose and accompanying research questions. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the proposed rationale and significance of this study.

Context and Background

Consumption trends within the U.S.

Consumerism. Consumerism is the belief that personal wellbeing and happiness can be achieved through material consumption (Murphy, 2000). Because consumption is viewed as the route to enhance the quality of life (Durning, 1999), in a consumerist society, people devote a great deal of time, energy, thought, and resources to consumption.

Consumerism is fueled by marketing. U.S. consumers are constantly bombarded with advertisements persuading them to buy things. In 2004, the average child in the United States, between the ages of two and eleven, saw 25,629 television ads per year. At the same time, the average adult viewed over double (52,500) that amount (Holt, Ippolito, Desrochers, & Kelley, 2007). These findings translate into children spending over seven days annually and adults spending over 14 days annually watching television advertisements. These advertisements promote not only specific products but also a multitude of modern conveniences as a means to “acquire” happiness. Consequently, consumers are frequently and repeatedly encouraged to spend an inordinate amount of

energy and money on things that they most likely do not need. In fact, estimates reveal that the average American spends about 15% of his or her household income (i.e., more than \$8,000 a year) on things that they do not need (McIntyre, Sauter, & Stockdale, 2011).

For years, material consumption has been a prominent aspect of consumer culture in the United States (Ray, 1997). Consider the growth of the average size of new houses since the mid-1970s. The size of an average new house (i.e., single-family detached houses) has expanded from about 1,500 square feet in the mid-70s to over 2,300 square feet in 2010 (United States Census Bureau, 2011). The paradox here is that this dramatic change in the size of new homes occurred in a time period when the average number of household members was declining (Swim et al., 2010). Thus, this change represents an even greater increase in the amount of living space per person. Naturally, these large houses needed to be decorated and filled with things. Not surprising then that Nielsen (2011) reported almost a third of U.S. households (35.9 million) own four or more televisions.

Additional evidence of a culture of consumerism is the growth of the self-storage industry in the U.S. As homes are filled with things and marketing efforts continue to encourage consumers to buy more or replace existing with new, old items have to be shifted out of the home. Self-storage represents a \$22 billion-per-year industry that exceeds the revenues of Hollywood (Self Storage Association, 2011). According to the Self Storage Association (2011), there are approximately 46,500 storage facilities representing 2.2 billion square feet of space in the United States. This figure translates to

seven square feet of storage for every person in the nation. Nearly 10% of US households (about 10.8 million) rented a storage unit in 2011 representing an increase of 65% in the last 15 years.

In addition to the reduction of financial resources tied to consumers' purchasing unneeded things, there are other significant problems linked to consumerism. The consumption pattern of purchasing goods in excess of basic needs can harm the environment as well as create debt, clutter, and complexity in people's lives. Researchers have documented that a third of the Earth's natural resource base has already been consumed over the past 35 years (Loh et al., 1998; World Wildlife Fund [WWF], 2008). If this consumption pattern continues at the same rate, the world's natural capital will be depleted by the early 2030s (WWF, 2008).

Along with depletion of natural resources is the harm resulting from waste production contaminating both water and land. The United Nations Environment Program reported that there are more than 46,000 pieces of plastic floating in every square mile of ocean on the earth, damaging ocean life (Kershaw et al., 2011). In fact, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, there is a garbage patch full of floating plastics and artificial debris that is believed to be roughly twice the size of the state of Texas (Hoshaw, 2009).

Within the U.S., Americans produced about 4.3 pounds of waste per person per day in 2010 compared to 2.7 pounds in 1960 (United States Environmental Protection Agency [EPA], 2011). In 2008, they generated 3.16 million pieces of toxic electronics (EPA, 2009). Ultimately, these practices not only damage the environment but also

threaten human's well-being. For instance, when a person consumes fish that fed on the plastic debris floating in the ocean, that person may be transferring toxins to his/ her body. Toxins accumulated in the body from multiple polluted food sources may subsequently cause acute health risks (Hoshaw, 2009) including malnutrition, diarrhea, and possibly cancer (Pimentel et al., 2007).

Researchers have also documented that a consumption-dominated lifestyle is detrimental to human well-being. Consumption is often associated with over-work that leads to increased levels of stress (Schor, 1999) and can cause stagnation as well as reductions in happiness (Binswanger, 2006). In addition, excessive consumption is linked to financial stress as it fuels the expansion of consumer debt. Total U.S. consumer debt is estimated to be at \$2.5 trillion, as of December 2011, about seven times the \$355 billion recorded in 1980 (Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, 2012). Moreover, the average U.S. household's credit card debt is estimated to be around \$15,799 per household (Woolsey & Schulz, 2011).

When people spend money on things, they are bound to accumulate clutter. Consider the space, time, and effort consumed to manage the clutter. Clutter not only uses up valuable space but also can cause stress and impair functioning of everyday life. The US Department of Energy reported that 25% of people with a two-car garage had so many possessions stored in their garage that they had no room to park a vehicle inside. Another 32% had room for only one vehicle (Montanaro, 2011). According to the National Soap and Detergent Association, removing excess clutter would eliminate 40% of the housework in the average home (Morgenstern, 2004). As indicated previously, for

some people, space lost to clutter can become so great within the home that extra space, such as a self-storage unit, is acquired to save, organize, and deal with the accumulated stockpile of objects. Some individuals even hire professional clutter organizers to help them reduce the stress associated with the management of their things and control their clutter (Horovitz, 2004).

Consumerism is also linked to dangerous aggressive acts against other people. Perhaps this dark side to consumerism is best exemplified by the aggressive behavior demonstrated on Black Friday. In the U.S., the name Black Friday has been given to the day after Thanksgiving. On this day many retailers offer consumers deeply discounted prices on popular consumer goods including electronics and apparel (Lennon, Johnson, & Lee, 2011). There have been numerous reports of consumers fighting over merchandise and engaging in other types of aggressive behaviors against both other consumers and retail employees. Perhaps the most egregious example of aggression against a retail employee was the case of the Wal-Mart employee who was trampled to death in 2008 (McFadden & Macropoulos, 2008). The employee was a seasonal worker who was attempting to control the crowd of shoppers who were lined up to get into the store. The crowd was pressing against the doors of the store to force the doors open and gain admittance. The young male employee was trying to prevent their movement. The door was shattered under the press of the crowd and shoppers pushed in. In the process they trampled the store employee to death. Even after emergency personnel informed shoppers that the store was closed, shoppers refused to leave claiming that they had been waiting for over eight hours to get into the store to buy.

Clearly, this pattern of hyper-consumerism within the U.S. has had negative impacts on some consumers' quality of life as well as the environment. Because of the negative outcomes associated with this behavior, it is clear that traditional consumption patterns are not sustainable. Thus, finding a way to consume sustainably and possibly alter traditional consumption practices is a matter of urgency.

Anti-consumerism. With every trend there is often the development of a counter trend (Waters, 2006). In contrast to the hyper-consumerism previously described, there are within the U.S. cultural currents that challenge the fundamental tenets of excessive consumption and that advocate for a simple and slow pace of life with less concern for material things. The term anti-consumerism has been used to refer to this trend (Binkley & Littler, 2008; Cherrier, 2010; Purkis, 1996). Manifestations of anti-consumerism include sustainable consumption (Marchand, Walker, & Cooper, 2010; Prothero et al., 2011), voluntary simplicity (Binkley & Littler, 2008; Cherrier, 2010), consumer resistance (Fischer, 2001; Penaloza & Price, 2003; Zavestoski, 2002a, 2002b), boycotting (Herrman, 1993; Kozinets & Handelman, 2004), ethical consumption (Shaw & Newholm, 2002), or non-consumption (Stammerjohan & Webster, 2002).

Fueled by a variety of concerns including the environment, overconsumption, clutter, and extensive advertising, clusters of individuals have begun to engage in a range of anti-consumerism activities. Some anti-consumers consciously resist throwing things away in their everyday lives, adopt a simpler lifestyle, reduce their general level of consumption, or refuse to use brands from socially irresponsible businesses or products that are harmful to the environment. Some may participate in explicit anti-consumerism

manifestations such as Buy Nothing Day (Wickens, 2007), Burning Man weeks (Kozinets, 2002), or boycotting events (Sen, Gurhan-Canli, & Morwitz 2001). Encouraging people to take part in these demonstrations are articles contained in an anti-consumerist magazine called *Adbusters* that challenges the culture of consumerism.

Anti-consumerism highlights the non-material sources of well-being that consumerism cannot ultimately satisfy and it is considered to be a path toward a sustainable future (Cherrier, 2010; Shaw & Moraes, 2009). However, there are potential impediments on that path. The notion of encouraging consumers to consume less can be considered as a threat to both the market system and to economic growth. For consumers, participating in anti-consumerism activities requires time, money, and effort. Consumers need to sacrifice and resign the lifestyles to which they have become accustomed. This sacrifice is difficult to make because consumption is not only a human act and essential for the fulfillment of basic needs (Kozinets, 2002), but it is also a means of expression as it is through the cultural significance of goods that individuals communicate themselves and their identities (Douglas & Isherwood, 1996).

Emerging consumption trend: Collaborative consumption.

Hyper-consumerism and anti-consumerism can be placed on a continuum and represent the extreme ends of that continuum. One emerging consumer pattern located somewhere between these two extremes is collaborative consumption. Collaborative consumption is a term that has been coined to refer to the socio-economic movement of sharing, bartering, lending, or swapping individuals' assets including space, products, time, and skills. Things people may be interested in collaboratively consuming include

cars, spare bedrooms in a home of empty nesters, office space, power tools, items of clothing that have been worn once (e.g., prom dresses), or any extra belongings of an individual. Categories of goods that are particularly attractive to collaborative consumption include things that are rarely used (e.g., crystal punch bowls) or used for short periods of time (e.g., baby cribs).

Collaborative consumption is transforming the way people consume, value, and interact with goods (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). Driven by a range of factors including the global recession, development of social networks, cost conscious consumers, and an increasing desire for sustainable and non-wasteful living, collaborative consumption is viewed as a profitable alternative to traditional ownership-based consumption. In contrast to ownership-based consumption, collaborative consumption is based on the premise that people will pay for the benefit of having access to products and services over ownership. Owners of resources can earn income on assets and people who do not want the expense of owning resources can simply pay for what they use.

Collaborative consumption is also different from anti-consumer movements because collaborative consumption emphasizes consumers' personal needs and wants rather than guilt or sacrifice. Although sustainability is often an unintended outcome of collaborative consumption (Botsman & Rogers, 2010), consumers participate in collaborative consumption activities without being forced or persuaded to be ethical or green.

Although the concept of sharing, renting, or lending goods is not new as neighbors and small communities have practiced these behaviors for many years, the

Internet creates both the efficiency and social connections to share, lend, or swap under-utilized assets on a scale and in ways that have never been possible prior to its existence. The Internet enables people to connect with anyone, both known and unknown, without location and time boundaries. People can share their assets not only with local community members including relatives, friends, and neighbors, but also with strangers located anywhere.

Sharing of digital products (e.g., music, movies) and services via community websites such as Linux, Wikipedia, and YouTube marked the beginning of this new form of collaborative consumption (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Gansky, 2010). Expanding from sharing intangible assets (e.g., movie files, music files), collaborative consumption of tangible (i.e., physical) products is expanding at a rapid rate (Gansky, 2010). For example, Zipcar, an American membership-based car sharing company providing automobile rental to its members, has grown from 210,000 members in 2008 to 515,000 members in 2011 with revenues of over \$186.1 million (Team, 2011). Bicycle sharing systems are gaining popularity in several cities including Miami, Minneapolis, Washington D.C., and New York (“Bike Sharing,” 2012). Airbnb is an online service that allows people to rent out their home or apartment to others who seek short-term accommodations. Airbnb has about 100,000 listings in 19,000 cities and towns representing 192 countries. Consumers have booked more than 2 million nights through the service (Maag, 2012). ThredUp, the nation’s leading online platform for swapping kids’ clothes, has swapped over a million items (as of May 2011) and is adding around 1,000 new members every day (“ThredUp Adds,” 2011).

Systems of collaborative consumption. There are three main systems of collaborative consumption (Botsman & Rogers 2010). The first system is labeled *product service systems*. This type of collaborative consumption enables companies to offer goods as a service rather than to sell them as products. For example, Netflix shares movies and TV programs, ZipCar rents cars to its members, and Chegg rents textbooks to college students. Product service systems also include goods that are privately owned and shared or rented between peers. Relay Rides enables car owners to rent out their cars and Zilok provides a person-to-person rental service, letting people connect and rent any of their resources.

The second system of collaborative consumption is labeled *redistribution markets*. These markets enable the re-ownership of a product. Unwanted used or pre-owned goods are transferred to a location where they are needed. In some instances (e.g., Freecycle and Kashless), the goods are given away. In other instances, the goods are swapped (e.g., ThredUP and SwapTree) or sold for cash (e.g., eBay and craigslist). For example, Freecycle offers people a platform to give away any personal items at no charge. It is a type of online donation center. However, the individual interested in obtaining the item is responsible for any costs linked to taking over ownership. SwapTree enables people to trade pre-owned goods such as books, CDs, DVDs, and video games. Through craigslist, people can sell and buy used goods.

The third system is labeled *collaborative lifestyles*. In this category, less tangible assets and skills are shared. People with similar needs or interests form a community to share and exchange assets such as their skills, space, and time. People may share working

spaces (e.g., Citizen Space or Hub Culture), gardens (e.g., Landshare), parking spots (e.g., ParkatmyHouse), or expertise (e.g., Brooklyn Skillshare).

Collaborative consumption has become a multi-billion dollar industry, creating new opportunities for entrepreneurs and investors. Online collaborative consumption providers such as Airbnb and Zipcar were valued at more than \$1 billion in 2011 (Fowler, 2011). Car-sharing revenues in the U.S. are predicted to reach \$3.3 billion by 2016 (Zhao, 2010), consumer peer-to-peer rental market is expected to become a \$26 billion industry, and the swap market for used children's clothing is estimated to be between \$1 billion to \$3 billion in the U.S. (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). In total, the collaborative consumption market is believed to be a \$110 billion-plus market (Botsman & Rogers, 2010).

Recognizing this, some ownership-based firms are considering entering this market by adding sharing options. For example, the traditional automobile manufacturer General Motors (GM) teamed up with RelayRides, a peer-to-peer car-sharing company to create a program that allows GM vehicle owners to rent out their idle cars ("GM Enters," 2011). Two luxury car brands, Mercedes and BMW, have already entered the car sharing business (Kurylko, 2010). BMW launched a program called "DriveNow" that allows customers to gain access to various premium models in an innovative way. With DriveNow, users can download an application to their smart device that locates the closest BMW to rent, and the door can be unlocked by using a chip in user's driver's license (Zimmer, 2011). Mercedes is creating a car-sharing application called CarTogether that can help drivers find people with whom to share rides (Terdiman, 2012).

In spite of the rise of collaborative consumption practices, little is known about the consumers who practice this form of consumption. The importance of understanding collaborative consumption is high because of its potential to reduce waste and costs, to create global communities, to produce new business opportunities, and to be a compelling alternative to traditional forms of buying and ownership. In 2011, *Time* magazine identified collaborative consumption to be one of the ten ideas that will change the world. Therefore, the time is right to explore collaborative consumption and to contribute to the literature by systematically documenting this emerging form of consumption.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

To date, the majority of consumer researchers have examined the purchase and consumption of private goods. Few researchers have examined the nature of consumption when the good is shared and transferred from one consumer to another. Thus, this study was designed to investigate the emerging phenomenon of online collaborative consumption by examining three systems of collaborative consumption (i.e., product service systems, redistribution markets, and collaborative lifestyles) to provide a multidimensional understanding of this consumer trend. Specific emphasis was placed on understanding consumers' experience of collaborative consumption in the context of sharing apparel products.

For a variety of reasons, clothing is somewhat unique as an item to be shared. Clothing is considered as one of the most convenient tools people use to communicate who they are and to project their unique image to others (Guy, Green, & Banim, 2001).

For that reason, consumers may have difficulty sharing their clothes with others or wearing second-hand clothes.

Clothing is a relatively inexpensive item especially in the context of “fast fashion” and people may hold a throwaway fashion attitude (Birtwistle & Moore, 2007).

Consumers may choose to discard unwanted clothing rather than to redistribute it because purchasing new garments may be less expensive and more convenient than sharing them. Thus, online collaborative consumption activities involving clothing may have limitations compared to other consumer products.

The primary purpose of this study was to provide an in-depth description of the experience of online collaborative consumption with special attention paid to participant’s experiences during three stages of consumption process: before, during, and after. The overall objective of the study was to document the benefits and costs of collaborative consumption to those who practice it and to provide practical implications for marketers interested in developing new business opportunities via collaborative consumption. Seven broad research questions were developed to guide this inquiry:

1. What is the nature of the lived experiences of collaborative consumers?
2. Who are collaborative consumers?
3. What motivates/deters engagement in collaborative consumption?
4. What criteria are used to evaluate collaborative consumption opportunities?
5. What does being an active collaborative consumer mean to these individuals?
6. What limitations exist concerning the growth of collaborative consumption?

7. How has participation in collaborative consumption impacted consumer views or behaviors concerning consumption in general?

Rationale and Significance of Study

The rationale for this study stems from a desire to document the phenomenon of collaborative consumption. Despite its pervasiveness, online collaborative consumption remains under-explored in the consumer behavior literature. Some research was done to examine online barter sites (e.g., Freecycle.org; Nelson, Rademacher, & Paek, 2007), sharing events (Albinsson & Perera, 2012), and car sharing programs (Lamberton & Rose, 2011). However, these studies do not provide a holistic understanding of the phenomenon including all three systems (product service systems, redistribution markets, collaborative lifestyles) of collaborative consumption. Moreover, much of these researches were conducted in the context of limited peer-to-peer interaction in which a consumer accesses the products or services through a service provider without any significant interaction with other consumers.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge by providing multiple views to online collaborative consumption. More specifically, within the context of sharing apparel products, this study explored who collaborative consumers are, the motivations that underlied engagement in collaborative consumption, and the consequences (i.e., benefits and costs) associated with collaborative consumption. Understanding the experiences of collaborative consumers is critical as they are indicative of future trends in consumer behavior, and studying their motivations helps prepare businesses, as well as government agencies that deal with the environment, health, and social issues, to meet

future demands. Increased understanding of collaborative consumption can facilitate sustainable business development that can reduce the number of new products and raw materials consumed without forcing consumers to be sustainable. Specifically, the findings of this research can provide marketers with ideas on how to adapt to consumer needs and find new ways of delivering value that are set apart from simply buying products or participating in traditional rental services.

In summary, the purpose of this study was to provide an in-depth description of the experiences of online collaborative consumers. It was anticipated that the knowledge generated from this inquiry affords new insights on contemporary consumer behavior that contributes to theory building and provides new avenues for inquiry.

Definitions of Key Terminology Used

Anti-consumerism – Anti-consumerism challenges the fundamental tenets of hyper consumption and advocates a simple and slower pace of life with less concern for material things (Cherrier, 2010).

Collaborative consumption – Collaborative consumption is a socio-economic movement of sharing, bartering, lending, or swapping individuals' assets including space, products, time, and skills (Botsman & Rogers, 2010).

Collaborative lifestyles – Collaborative lifestyles is one of three systems of collaborative consumption that entails sharing and exchanging less tangible resources and assets such as space, skills, or time (Botsman & Rogers, 2010).

Consumerism – Consumerism is the doctrine that the self cannot be complete without a wealth of consumer goods and that goals can be achieved and problems solved through proper consumption (Murphy, 2000)

Product service systems – Product service systems is one of three systems of collaborative consumption wherein consumers rent or share products (Botsman & Rogers, 2010).

Redistribution markets – Redistribution markets is one of three systems of collaborative consumption wherein used or pre-owned goods are passed on from someone who does not want them to someone who wants them (Botsman & Rogers, 2010).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This study aimed to explore consumers' experience with collaborative consumption. Specifically, I attempted to elucidate general characteristics of collaborative consumers, what motivates their engagement in collaborative consumption, what benefits or costs are related to their collaborative consumption, what criteria are used to create collaborative consumption opportunities, how trust between collaborative consumers is formed, what meanings are tied to collaborative consumption, and how this phenomenon impacts consumers' views and behaviors in general. This chapter begins by defining the meaning of sharing. Then, the characteristics of collaborative consumption and three systems of collaborative consumption are discussed in detail. Next, related literature regarding collaborative consumption focusing on motivations, benefits, and costs are presented.

Sharing

Sharing is the most universal form of human economic behavior (Price, 1975) and an alternative to private ownership (Belk, 2007). In sharing, two or more people enjoy the benefits or costs that a thing presents. According to Belk (2007, p. 127), sharing is "the act and process of distributing what is ours to others for their use and/or the act and process of receiving or taking something from others for our use." People may share tangible things such as cars, an office space, power tools, or clothing as well as intangible things such as knowledge, ideas, or skills.

Belk (2010) claimed that despite its pervasiveness, sharing remains an unrecognized and unmentioned topic in the consumer behavior literature because it is believed to occur in the internal world of the home rather than in the external world of work and the marketplace. It can be true that most sharing activities are performed within the boundaries of intimate members, a family. However, with development of the Internet, people are now sharing information, experiences, and their possessions online with others they have never met. Sometimes, people are more willing to share their personal secrets and information with strangers online than with their family members (Belk, 2007).

Collaborative Consumption Characteristics

While the 20th century was defined by hyper consumption, the 21st century will be defined by collaborative consumption (Botsman, 2010). Collaborative consumption is a system of sharing, lending, trading, renting, or swapping of goods, information, and resources that is being reinvented as a result of the Internet and the development of peer communities (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). Indeed, sharing, lending, trading, or swapping things is not a new concept and it is a rather mundane everyday human practice. However, our digital society brings a powerful context that takes these traditional human behaviors to a new level. Unlike traditional methods of swapping, renting, or sharing that are typically performed within the boundaries of family members, friends, neighbors, or local communities, collaborative consumption goes beyond the limits of size, time, and location. For example, arranging a clothing swap party or a yard sale, hauling used clothing to local vintage shops, or selling it at flea markets can be time consuming,

involves a small number of people, and is restricted to local areas. However, the contemporary collaborative consumption market place connects a community of users from all over the world, in real-time, and provides access to a variety of goods.

A basic characteristic of collaborative consumption is that access to goods is more important than ownership of them. People do not want goods per se, but rather the needs and experiences they fulfill (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). Kelly (2009) argued that as items are invented and manufactured, all goods and services will be short-term use. Therefore, instant access to goods will be preferred, at least for some products, rather than ownership given that access to products has the benefits of avoiding responsibility for care, cleaning, and storing idle goods.

Evidence that some consumers are very interested in having access rather than owning products comes from a study conducted by KRC Research (2011). This independent research firm was commissioned by a car sharing network Zipcar to better understand the current generation's attitude toward car ownership. They surveyed 1,045 adults who were 18 years of age and older. Their study revealed that people, especially the young, want access to things rather than to own them outright. Their results indicated that people from 18 to 34 years of age, who can be labeled as "Millennials," were more willing to use shared vehicles than individuals from previous generations. More than half of these Millennials (55%) indicated that they had actively made an effort to drive less. Reasons Millennials frequently provided for driving less included environmental concerns, total cost of vehicle ownership, and an increased use of social media. More than half stated that "protecting the environment" was a key reason for driving less. Most

Millennials (78 %) who were licensed drivers suggested that car ownership was difficult due to the high costs of gas, parking, and maintenance. In contrast to other generations, social media was another factor for them to drive less. Most Millennials (68%) agreed that they sometimes chose to use social media rather than going out to see friends and family.

Although other age groups showed less enthusiasm for collaborative consumption, the results still showed considerable interest. For example, about half of Generation Xers (between 35 to 45 years of age) said they were likely to participate in car or home/vacation sharing programs. Even the Baby boomers (between 46 to 66 years of age) were not completely negative about collaborative consumption, as around 10% of them were interested in participating in such activities.

Similar generational differences in views about collaborative consumption were found in a study conducted two years later by Carbonview Research. This research firm conducted a national online survey with a sample size of 383 to gather opinions about collaborative consumption (as cited in Olson, 2012). They found that both Generation Xers and Millennials (62% of both groups) considered sharing appealing. Interestingly, more Generation Xers (31%) than Millennials (24%) found the concept “very appealing.” In contrast, fewer Baby boomers (15%) thought sharing to be “very appealing.”

Participating in collaborative consumption practices could fulfill a sense of community – “the desire to feel a sense of belonging and connection with one’s community” (Johnstone & Conroy, 2007, p. 381). Collaborative consumption websites such as Airbnb, RelayRides, or ThredUp provide a platform for people with the same

interests to meet and interact with one another. Interactions with people who have similar interests and affection for particular objects can generate feelings of belongingness to a group of like-minded people (Belk, 2010). Zak, a researcher in neuroeconomics, claimed that participating in collaborative consumption communities could ease social isolation and build a network of friends (as cited in Penenberg, 2010; Wortham, 2010). In his preliminary experiment, participants were asked to post, chat, and communicate on Twitter for ten minutes with both people they knew and strangers. Blood samples of participants were collected immediately before and after the experiment. Zak found that posting messages on Twitter caused the release of oxytocin, a neurotransmitter that induces a sense of positive social bonding. This result was interpreted as support for the idea that even through the Web participants felt a real physiological relationship to the individual they were communicating with. It was as if they were directly interacting with each other (Penberg, 2010).

Feelings of belonging are related to sharing activities. Lastovicka and Fernandez (2005) found that common experience and knowledge between strangers eliminated barriers and increased the likelihood of certain forms of sharing. They collected participant-observation data from 11 garage sales and interviewed sellers and their families and friends. At these garage sales, occupational similarity generated confidence in the seller that the buyer was a suitable recipient of the seller's meaningful possession. The researchers speculated that the highest level of seller satisfaction may occur when selling a meaningful possession to a buyer with shared experiences rooted in common groups.

Although some researchers argued that individuals tend to trust those with whom they have attitudes or other characteristics in common (Siegrist, Cvetkovich, & Roth, 2000; Turban & Jones, 1988), building trust in a collaborative consumption context is a big challenge. Trust in members can be a major factor that affects the prosperity and success of the collaborative consumption community because in a virtual environment, participants are usually anonymous and never engage in direct face-to-face communication. People share information, experiences, and their possessions online with others they have never met. Trust in collaborative consumption is interpersonal, and therefore different from trust in online stores, systems, or shopping (Lu, Zhao, & Wang, 2010). In a collaborative consumption environment, trust exists between an individual and other unfamiliar members in the community as opposed to trust in a specific company. Therefore, the measurement of reputation capital across communities and the marketplace is as important as a credit card score or credit rating is in the offline world (Rogers & Kennedy, 2011). For instance, CouchSurfing, a worldwide network for making connections between travelers and local communities for accommodations offers a multi-faceted reputation system (i.e., physical verification, personal references, and vouching) to increase trust among its members. Personal verification enables members to have their name and physical address confirmed after paying a small fee. This confirmation provides a type of background check on where a shared item might be going to or coming from and whether the individual interested in sharing with another actually lives at the location indicated. Personal references are ratings and feedback left by members on others' profiles similar to an online product review (e.g., star rating system)

done on a retail website (Lauterbach, Truong, Shah, & Adamic, 2009). The vouching system is an explicit rating of friendship within a small circle of users. When a member vouches for someone, the member is telling the community that he/she trusts this person highly and is willing to stand behind them. Members can only vouch for other members they have met face-to-face and feel are trustworthy people. These accumulated reputation records inform users about whom to trust, encourages trustworthy behavior, and deters participation in collaborative consumption by those who are unskilled or dishonest (Resnick, Zeckhauser, Friedman, & Kuwabara, 2000). However, these reputation systems are incomplete, and building trust remains one of the biggest challenges collaborative consumption communities face. To date, there is little understanding of how reputation systems are actually used and how trust is navigated by consumers. Thus, one research objective was to further understanding of how trust is established, maintained, and rebuilt in circumstances in which it has deteriorated.

Detailed Discussion of the Three Systems of Collaborative Consumption

As noted previously, collaborative consumption can be categorized into three different systems: product service systems, redistribution markets, and collaborative lifestyles (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). Product service systems facilitate sharing or renting of products and provide consumers access rather than ownership. Thus, consumers pay for the benefit of using a product without owning the product. For example, RenttheRunway allows its members to rent high-end fashion items including dresses and accessories at a fraction of their retail prices. Founded in 2009, the website offers over 25,000 dresses and accessories from over 95 designers such as Versace, Vera Wang, and

Calvin Klein. The rentals cost from \$50 to \$200 for a four-night loan and are shipped directly to the customer's home. To resolve problems with fitting, they have on-call stylists who can advise customers on how certain materials feel and how a particular dress might fit on various body types. In addition, the site offers returns within 24 hours for any reason and an extra size of the selected item is shipped together with the original requested size at no additional cost. RenttheRunway has grown to over a million members and 40,000 new members sign up every week (Wortham, 2011).

Whereas RenttheRunway is a business model in which a company acquires, maintains, and rents products to consumers (business-to-consumer), peer-to-peer renting is an emerging area of product service systems that allows users to rent out their own possessions to others. Compared to business-to-consumer renting, peer-to-peer is more capital efficient and sustainable because it requires less capital investment to acquire assets (MIT Entrepreneurship Review, 2011). For example, I-Ella is an exclusive invitation-only site that provides its members a platform to rent their new or barely used high-end fashion apparel and accessories to other members. Members list their items with a rental price on the site. There is no cost associated with listing an item. Once an item is selected by another member, I-Ella charges 10% of the transaction fee to facilitate the exchange. I-Ella provides guidelines on how to share items and what items are acceptable for sharing. I-Ella also offers a listing service for users who are willing to lend their items but are too busy to photograph, post, or ship them.

Redistribution markets provide services that efficiently enable the exchange of used or pre-owned goods from where they are not needed to where they are (Botsman &

Rogers, 2010). Used goods have been exchanged for many years at both the personal (e.g., yard sales, swap parties) and community level (e.g., recycling programs, Goodwill). However, with the Internet, such exchanges have become more efficient than before. For example, ThredUp provides an online community for parents to swap and redistribute clothing that children have outgrown. Since its launch in 2010, it has built a community of hundreds of thousands of members who exchange children's clothing (as cited in Kantra, 2011). Parents with unwanted clothing are provided with free shipping boxes where they can store the clothing. They post what is in their boxes in a list for other users to browse online. Once a box is "sold," ThredUp gives credit to the seller. With earned credit, sellers can acquire a box of clothing from other members that is more in line with their children's needs.

Parents with clothing needs can select a box of clothing posted on the ThredUp web site. They typically acquire about 15 items of kids' clothing in a box by paying the box price which starts at \$9 plus the shipping cost to ThredUp. Recipients rate the quality and style of the clothes on ThredUp. These data form the basis of a seller's reputation.

Collaborative lifestyles help people exchange and utilize underutilized intangible assets such as time, space, and skills (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). Sharing digital contents including documents, photos, and videos has been prominent among individuals and communities online. Of late, people are sharing their time and labor. For example, TaskRabbit helps people run errands. Users post tasks that they need to complete with the amount of money or other resources they would be willing to pay. There are a variety of tasks posted including delivery, shopping, sewing, and event help. Subsequently, people

who are interested in doing the posted tasks, called Rabbits, bid on the task. Usually, it is the lowest bidder that is selected to complete the task. TaskRabbit receives a portion of the transaction. Since its launch in 2008 in San Francisco, TaskRabbit operates in nine cities - Boston, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, LA, Austin, Portland, Seattle, and San Antonio with over 2,000 task Rabbits. To ensure the safety of the users, each task Rabbit goes through a multiple step application process including an essay, video interviews, and a background check before being selected to run tasks. About 9,000 tasks are posted a month and according to its records, Rabbits can earn up to \$5,000 a month from doing the posted tasks (Cuomo, Adhikari, & Patrick, 2011).

Motivations for Collaborative Consumption

Botsman and Rogers (2010) speculated that across all systems of collaborative consumption the motivation to participate included personal monetary gain, feeling a part of a community, concerns about sustainability, and the economic recession. They did not do research to support their assumptions. However, a few others have conducted research on the motivations that drive collaborative consumption. For example, an international research consultancy firm, Latitude, identified four drivers of collaborative consumption: technology, community, environmental concerns, and global recession (Sakaria, Gaskins, & Stehfest, 2010). They conducted an international online survey with 537 people who reported their current engagement and future interest in collaborative consumption across industry categories. Latitude found that online sharing was a good predictor of offline sharing. Participants who shared information or media online also shared various things offline. Most participants (85%) believed that Web and mobile technologies will play a

critical role in building large-scale sharing communities in the future. Most participants (78%) indicated their online interactions with people made them more open to the idea of sharing with strangers. Moreover, most participants (78%) indicated that they had used local, peer-to-peer Web platforms such as Craigslist or Freecycle where online connectivity facilitated offline sharing and social activities. The majority of participants (60%) saw a connection between sharing and sustainability, citing “better for the environment” as one benefit of sharing. Latitude also found that participants with low incomes were more likely to engage in sharing behavior and to feel positive towards the idea of sharing than participants with high incomes. They also tended to feel comfortable sharing amongst anyone who joined a sharing community. Generally, people were not aware that collaborative consumption services like NeighborGoods and TaskRabbit existed to help them share.

In later research, Lamberton and Rose (2011) conducted three studies to investigate whether there were other factors beyond cost-related benefits that impacted propensity to participate in collaborative consumption. In study one, the researchers surveyed 369 adult consumers regarding a shared vehicle program similar to Zipcar. In study two, they had 123 consumers evaluate cell phone plans modeled on marketplace offerings, where cost savings from sharing were explicitly stated. In study three, they conducted an experiment about a bicycle-sharing plan with 105 undergraduate students. Relative to motivation for participating in collaborative consumption, their results showed that perceived risk of product scarcity was a major driver of sharing propensity and that rivalry for the shared product was a key aspect of collaborative consumption.

They argued that marketers should use marketing communications in ways that alter perceived product scarcity risk instead of competing on the benefit of cost alone.

Albinsson and Perera (2012) examined collaborative consumption as non-monetary-based private and public sharing events such as Really Really Free markets. They found that sense of community was both a driver and outcome of participating in sharing events and concluded that consumers not only valued developing relationships with their friends and family but also valued forming connections with like-minded strangers.

In the context of freecycling community (freecycle.org), Nelson, Rademacher and Paek (2007) surveyed 183 freecycle members to examine motivations and practices related to consumption. They found that compared to non-members, members were less materialistic, had higher levels of civic involvement, and tended to practice political consumption (e.g., boycotts). They suggested four categories of motivation for joining freecycle community: decluttering (33%), self-oriented needs and wants (27%), environmental concerns (27%), and other-oriented reasons (8%). The self-oriented needs and wants category was related to economic purposes (e.g., save money) or personal desires (e.g., love for bargain). Other-oriented reasons included interest in helping others or feeling a sense of bonding.

The expected duration of use of an item could also motivate consumers to collaboratively consume. Moore and Taylor (2009) performed an experiment to find whether the expected duration of use affected consumers' decisions on the choice to buy an item or to rent it. Fifty eight undergraduate students were recruited for the 2 [time

duration] x 2 [buy, rent] experiment. They manipulated the duration of use as a short duration of three months versus a long duration of one year. For each experimental scenario, participants were given a one-page description in which they were asked to imagine that they had to move to a distant town to work on a project for the specified duration (three months or one year). They could decide either to rent or buy the furniture they needed. The total amount of money to do either was held constant. The researchers found that when the duration was short, renting was preferred, whereas buying was preferred for the one year duration.

Motivations may also include the notion of somehow “paying back” the benefits previously received from the Internet. Hyde (1983) suggested that people are impelled to continue to share when someone has shared with them, although not necessarily with the same person. For example, if someone allows an individual to merge into heavy traffic (effectively sharing the road with the individual), the individual who received the favor may be inclined to do the same for others in the future. Similarly, in a file sharing context, Coyne (2005) considered “altruism” to be a possible motive for exchanging possessions on the Internet. One type was labeled “cheap altruism” wherein people give away a digital song, computer program, photograph, or text file. It is cheap philanthropy because even though the item is shared or given away, the donor retains possession. Another category that Coyne offered was labeled “true altruism”. The example provided was the development of the Internet because the Internet itself enables a global community of sharing, communicating, and giving, with a free flow of information, providing equality to anyone who has access.

Benefits to Collaborative Consumption

Botsman and Rogers (2010) posited that collaborative consumption offers something superior to the traditional ownership-based market. Indeed, collaborative consumption offers consumers a variety of benefits. It generally reduces the costs associated with ownership, including the cost of storage or maintenance especially for products that are only needed temporarily and less essential. For example, rather than buying a new dress for a day event (e.g., prom), renting a dress enables an individual to accomplish her goal without increasing her wardrobe or maintenance expenditures. The money paid to rent an item from another consumer can be used to offset the preservation or maintenance costs of the owner. In addition, collaborative consumption reduces the storage needs of individuals and removes the household clutter of countless items that they seldom use.

In contrast to ownership-based consumption, collaborative consumption also contributes to environmental sustainability (e.g., reducing the number of items that enter incinerators and landfills). Vehicle sharing can reduce the congestion of roads and parking lots. Renting and redistributing goods may decrease the extraction of raw materials and energy consumption necessary for the production of goods and services. One consumer group that has embraced collaborative consumption for its environmentally friendly approach to consumption is voluntary simplifiers. Ballantine and Creery (2010) conducted in-depth interviews to explore the disposition activities of 12 voluntary simplifiers who limited expenditures on consumer goods and were environmentally conscious. These voluntary simplifiers expressed a strong desire for

shared ownership rather than individual possession and preferred to buy second-hand or used goods because they thought by doing so manufacturers would produce less and that they would reduce waste. To voluntary simplifiers, shared ownership and purchasing second-hand goods were considered ways of suppressing material consumption and acting in an environmentally friendly manner.

Outlining the benefits to a consumer decision reflects a rational approach to decision making. However, consumer decisions are also impacted by emotions including feelings of fun and excitement. For example, consumers can experience positive emotions when sharing products with others. In a collaborative lifestyle, people with similar interests can bond together to share and exchange their skills, time, and space. A discussion with a seller can represent a meaningful interaction and give rise to storytelling or affective links with an object (Kopytoff, 1986). Thus, collaborative consumption fosters a sense of social connection and being a part of a community. This emotional aspect can be evidenced in the context of garage sales. Lastovicka and Fernandez (2005) argued that garage sales frequently functioned as a social gathering where personal belongings were traded like gifts between sellers and buyers. They concluded that these traders placed more importance on socializing than making a profit.

In the previously noted study conducted by Carbonview research (as cited in Olson, 2012), 383 respondents ranked lists of both the rational and emotional benefits of participating in collaborative consumption. As expected, “saving money” was ranked first in the rational benefits list followed by “good for the environment.” “Generosity to myself and others” was the top reported emotional benefit followed by “feel like I am a

valued part of the community.” They claimed that the perceived rational benefits were focused on reduction and practicality, whereas emotional benefits delivered affirmation and belonging.

Although donation behavior is not strictly related to collaborative consumption, the benefits perceived by consumers can be similar. Ha-Brookshire and Hodges’s (2009) interpretive analysis revealed that people experienced both rational and emotional benefits through their donation behavior. In order to gain an understanding of consumer disposal behavior in a used clothing donation setting, they interviewed 15 individuals who had donated at least one item of used clothing in the past six months. The researchers found that from a rational perspective, the benefit of donation was closet cleaning. From an emotional perspective, the participants shared that they felt better after making their used clothing donations. The researchers argued that emotional benefit appeared to be primarily centered on personal pleasure or enjoyment from diminishing guilt, whether it was guilt caused by wasteful past purchase behavior or because little worn items were taking up closet space.

Impediments to Collaborative Consumption

Because collaborative consumption is about sharing, renting, and swapping goods using the web, trust is a major concern for consumers. On the web, the identity of a seller/renter is usually unknown and buyers/ rentees do not have direct contact with the offered items making buyers/ rentees feel uncertain about product quality. Buyers also face the risk of not receiving a purchased item after payment or receiving the item in an unexpected condition (Bauerly, 2009). According to the Carbonview research (as cited in

Olson, 2012), 67% of their respondents ($N = 383$) noted fears about participating in collaborative consumption because of trust issues. The biggest concern identified was that a lent item would be lost/stolen (30 %), followed by worries about trusting the network (23 %), and privacy concerns (14 %). Other personal barriers to collaborative consumption were issues of value and quality articulated as concerns about “sharing not being worth the effort” (12 %), “goods/services being of poor quality” (12 %), and “other factors” (9 %).

Another possible obstacle to collaborative consumption is people’s attachment to the things they own or possess (Belk, 2007; Kleine & Baker, 2004). Often, material possessions become much more than their functional properties and may be used to construct one’s self. Hence, possessions with such properties become a symbolic manifestation of who one is, that is, an extension of the self (Belk, 1988). Belk (1988, 2007) claimed that to the extent that people feel a possession is a part of their extended self, they are reluctant to share it and are likely to retain it. This claim is supported by findings from Ferraro, Escalas, and Bettman (2011). They argued that the extent to which a possession is able to represent the self is a critical component of possession attachment and affects how consumers respond to possession loss. They conducted two experimental studies using a Web-based facility for online research. The first study collected data from 137 English-speaking members of an international panel and the second study was conducted with 361 respondents to a study invitation. The researchers found that imagining the loss of a possession with a strong link to self leads to separation distress

and negative emotions. Additionally, they found that consumers formed possession–self linkages when they used the possession to reflect important values (e.g., self worth).

Lastovicka and Sirianni (2011) used the phrase “material possession love” to talk about individuals’ attachment to possessions. In their view, material possession love was a property of a consumer’s relationship with a specific possession, reflecting the nature and degree of a consumer’s positive emotional attachment to an object. They employed a mixed-methods research design to develop and empirically test their conceptualization of material possession love in four separate consumption contexts (automobiles, computers, bicycles, and firearms). Their results revealed that material possession love propelled nurturing behaviors. In other words, consumers give their time, energy, and other resources to take care of their beloved possessions and to enhance their relationships with those possessions. The researchers also found that material possession love was linked to loneliness and social affiliation deficits. They suggested that material possession love contributed to consumer well-being.

The value that individuals place on owning material objects, also referred to as materialism, can also inhibit willingness to participate in collaborative consumption. Richins and Dawson (1992) defined materialism as “the importance ascribed to the ownership and acquisition of material goods in achieving major life goals or desired states”. They conceptualized materialism as encompassing three domains: the use of possessions to judge the success of others and oneself, the centrality of possessions in a person’s life, and the belief that possessions and their acquisition lead to happiness and life satisfaction. This conceptualization of materialist individuals is supported in research

by Kilbourne and LaForge (2012). Using data from a telephone survey with a random sample of 303 U.S. respondents, they examined the relationship between individual values and materialism. Their results showed that high-materialism consumers believed that possessions were essential to satisfaction and well-being in life. These high-materialism consumers also emphasized acquiring material goods to signal status and success. It is not a large leap to speculate that materialistic individuals are unlikely to be interested in collaborative consumption.

Another impediment to collaborative consumption could be the perception of scarceness of personal resources (Belk, 2007). Consider the case of luxury goods. It could be argued that there is a limited number of luxury goods produced and that not many people can afford to buy them. However, if these luxury goods are easily accessible to the general public, both in terms of number as well as price, their status-conferring power is lost or reduced (Belk, 2007) along with their “aura” of being an original (Benjamin, 1968). Thus, average consumers may hesitate to consume luxury goods via collaborative consumption because sharing increases both their availability and affordability.

However, the average consumer, during a recessionary period may have an increased desire to collaboratively consume luxury products because during a recession, the standard of living of an average consumer typically decreases. At the same time, the cost of luxury goods increases making them less affordable and available than before the recessionary period. Nunes, Drèze, and Han (2011) collected data from designer handbag manufacturers, Louis Vuitton and Gucci, both before and in the midst of a recession. They found that products introduced during the recession were more expensive than

products introduced before the recession. Thus, the increase in prices decreases affordability and this change may impact the interest and desire of typical consumers to collaboratively consume luxury items.

In summary, collaborative consumption facilitated by the Internet is an emerging area of consumer behavior. Few researchers have studied collaborative consumption, and those who have provided limited descriptive information about the phenomenon. However, as collaborative consumption is gaining popularity, deeper understanding of the phenomenon is needed. Thus, this study is designed to provide an in-depth investigation of the phenomenon of collaborative consumption by exploring the experiences of collaborative consumers. This research is expected to provide new knowledge, to generate additional research questions, to contribute to developing theory, and to provide implications for marketers and new businesses.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study is to further understanding of contemporary collaborative consumption by investigating the experiences, motivations, perceptions, and behaviors of a purposive sample of collaborative consumers. Increased understanding of collaborative consumption provided by the data resulting from this inquiry can yield the following: an in-depth description of collaborative consumers, a model of collaborative consumption, items that could be used in generating a quantitative measure of collaborative consumption, and future research questions. In seeking to understand collaborative consumption, seven broad research questions were developed: (1) What is the nature of the lived experiences of collaborative consumers? (2) Who are collaborative consumers? (3) What motivates/deters engagement in collaborative consumption? (4) What criteria are used to collaborative consumption opportunities? (5) What limitations exist concerning the growth of collaborative consumption? (6) What does being an active collaborative consumer mean to these individuals? (7) How has participation in collaborative consumption impacted consumer views or behaviors concerning consumption in general?

This chapter describes the research methodology utilized for this study and includes discussions of the following: (1) rationale for the selected research approach, (2) description of the research sample, (3) methods of data collection, (4) data analysis, (5) ethical considerations, and (6) issues of trustworthiness.

Research Approach

A qualitative approach was used to investigate consumers' experiences of collaborative consumption. Qualitative research is a systematic approach to understanding qualities or the essential nature of a phenomenon within a particular context (Brantlinger, Jiminez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005). The goal of qualitative research is to produce descriptive or procedural knowledge, that is, answering questions about what is happening and why (Shavelson & Towne, 2002). Qualitative research emphasizes discovery as well as description, and attempts to achieve a holistic understanding of a phenomenon (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Maxwell, 2005; Merriam & Associates, 2002; Schram, 2003). Therefore, to address the proposed research purpose, a qualitative method was appropriate.

Within the framework of a qualitative method, the proposed study was well-suited for taking a phenomenological approach. Phenomenological research attempts to uncover and describe lived experiences to arrive at a deeper understanding of the nature or meanings of phenomena (Moustakas 1994; Van Manen, 1990). Phenomenological researchers focus on describing and understanding several individuals' common or shared experiences of a phenomenon. According to Creswell (2007), among five qualitative approaches (i.e., narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study), only phenomenology is specifically designed to study the essence and meaning of experience. The distinctive features of phenomenological research are to "employ description within the attitude of the phenomenological reduction, and seek the most invariant meanings for a context" (Giorgi, 1997, p. 235). Another distinctive

requirement of phenomenological research is for researchers to set aside their experience and not adopt any position on the correctness or falsity of a participant's claims regarding their experiences with the phenomenon under examination (Ashworth, 1999; Giorgi, 1997). Phenomenological inquiry does not aim for empirical generalizations, establishment of functional relationships, or development of theory. Instead, it makes it possible to generate probable insights and bring in direct contact with the phenomenon (Van Manen, 1990). By using a phenomenological approach, the researcher is able to understand and describe collaborative consumption in-depth and arrive at the essence of the experience of collaborative consumers.

Research Sample

In order to achieve the essence of lived experiences of collaborative consumption, a purposive sampling method was employed to recruit participants. Purposive sampling entails the deliberate choice of participants who appear to be representative of the desired population (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). The population of interest was consumers living in the United States who participated in collaborative consumption via collaborative consumption websites. As collaborative consumption exists in three different forms: product service systems, redistribution markets, and collaborative lifestyles, the goal was to have equal representation of individuals representing each of the three forms.

Within purposive sampling, there are different techniques that can be employed. For this study, criterion sampling (i.e., selecting individuals who fulfill certain criteria, in this case, collaborative consumers in the United States) and snowball sampling (i.e.,

asking participants to refer the researcher to other individuals whom they know to be collaborative consumers) were employed to recruit participants.

In regards to sample size, the researcher employed the concept of data saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Data saturation refers to gathering new data until the data set reaches a point of diminishing return - when nothing new is being added. Theoretical saturation entails the point at which no new insights and themes are obtained and no issues arise regarding a category of data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This also means sampling to the point of redundancy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, when the collection of new data became repetitive and did not shed any further light on the issue, the researcher stopped collecting data. In addition, Polkinghorn's (1989) recommendation to interview from 5 to 25 individuals who have experienced the phenomenon was also used as a guide.

Data Collection

Data were collected in the form of interviews, field notes, and a reflective journal. The interview is a fundamental tool in qualitative research (Merriam, 1998; Seidman, 2006). Kvale (1996) claimed that the interview is the best way to understand the world from the subjects' perspectives, to disclose the meaning of subjects' experiences, and to uncover their lived world. Thus, the interview was a legitimate way to generate data that captured the meaning of collaborative consumers' experience in their own words.

The researcher used the seven research questions as the framework to develop open-ended interview questions. Under each research question, sub-questions were developed to help draw out detailed information and comments from the respondents.

The interview protocol began by asking participants about their experience of collaborative consumption during three stages of consumption process: before, during, and after. This section included questions about their history (before) with collaborative consumption, products they collaboratively consumed or shared, the processes or rituals they went through as they collaboratively consume (during), and willingness to continue participating in collaborative consumption (after). These questions encouraged the building of rapport between the participant and the researcher.

The second section contained questions about participants' motivations for participating in collaborative consumption and questions that asked participants to identify factors that deterred their engagement in collaborative consumption. Sample questions included "what motivates you to engage in collaborative consumption?" and "what deters you from engaging in collaborative consumption?" The third section contained questions designed to identify the criteria participants used to assess the probable success of a specific collaborative consumption opportunity. "What criteria do you use to evaluate the trustworthiness of a collaborative consumption provider?" is one example of the questions. The fourth section contained questions about the meaning and the importance of collaborative consumption to the participant. Sample questions included "What does sharing, trading, lending, renting, swapping, or bartering of assets mean to you?" and "How important is collaborative consumption to you?" The fifth section contained questions about whether collaborative consumption impacted participants' views or behaviors. Sample questions included "How has collaborative consumption changed your life or the way you consume things?" and "How do you

advocate for collaborative consumption?” The next section asked participants to share their views on whether there were any limitations to the growth of collaborative consumption. The last set of questions asked participants to share demographic information along with a brief description of their personal attributes. Participants were asked to indicate their gender, age, marital status, ethnic origin, and education level. The interview ended by thanking the participants for their time for the interview. For a complete interview schedule, see Appendix A.

To refine the interview questions, two pilot interviews were conducted. A pilot test is recommended to refine and develop research instruments, assess the degrees of observer bias, develop relevant lines of questions, and collect background information (Sampson, 2004). Data from the pilot interviews were used to refine and/or further develop questions as needed. This process enables the researcher to note any content that emerges in a response that may suggest the need for additional interview questions.

In addition to conducting interviews, the researcher also wrote a reflective journal and field notes. The use of a reflective journal adds rigor to qualitative inquiry as the investigator is able to record his/her reactions, assumptions, expectations, and biases about the research process as the process occurs (Morrow & Smith, 2000). The field notes provide additional data for analysis as the researcher captures his/her observations about the participant in the context of data collection.

After receiving approval for the use of human subjects in this research (study number 1203E11263) from the University of Minnesota’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researcher collected potential participants’ contact information from

collaborative consumption websites. These websites represented all three types of collaborative consumption: product service systems (e.g., RenttheRunway.com¹, NeighborGoods.net²), redistribution markets (e.g., ThredUp.com³, Swapstyle.com⁴), and collaborative lifestyles (e.g., TaskRabbit.com⁵, Skillshare.com⁶). Then, prospective participants were contacted via e-mail or their Facebook message boards to solicit their participation in the research. The email or message posted introduced the researcher, described the purpose of the study, invited participation, offered an incentive, and requested a convenient date and time for an in-depth interview (See Appendix B).

Interviews took place using Skype. Skype is an online service that enables individuals to conduct face-to-face conversations without location boundaries. Skype is a useful tool for research that is related to an online context (Kazmer & Xie, 2008) and has various advantages related to cost, ease of use, and geographic flexibility (Saumure & Given, 2010). Thus, it was ideal for conducting interviews with online collaborative consumers because the research context is online and participants are familiar with online interaction. In addition, Skype interview enables synchronous communication with consumers located anywhere in the United States.

¹ RenttheRunway.com is a luxury e-commerce company that rents designer dresses and accessories for a fraction of the retail price.

² NeighborGoods.net is a service to allow people to share physical items with other people in their area.

³ ThredUp.com is peer-to-peer children clothing exchange website.

⁴ Swapstyle.com allows users who pay a yearly annual fee (\$9.99) to swap their unwanted fashionable clothing with others.

⁵ TaskRabbit.com is an online and mobile marketplace that helps people to outsource their errands and tasks.

⁶ Skillshare.com is a community marketplace to share skills and knowledge (e.g. cooking, fashion, programming) with others.

Before each interview, interviewees were asked to review and sign a consent form. Each participant was sent via email a copy of the consent form to keep (See appendix C). Interviews ranged in length from 40 minutes to one hour; most lasted about 40 minutes. All the interviews were recorded using an audio device and the researcher took field notes documenting nonverbal expressions (e.g., body language, tone of voice) of participants. At the end of each interview, a 25 dollar gift card was offered to participants as appreciation for their time and effort. The interviews took place between May 2012 and January 2013.

Data Analysis

The researcher transcribed all the interviews verbatim along with any aspects of nonverbal communication that was recorded through field notes. The researcher created Microsoft Word files for the interviews, observations, and journal entries. All files were saved in the researcher's computer and were password protected.

After all the interviews were transcribed, each transcript was read and reviewed numerous times to ensure in-depth understanding of responses. Next, the data were grouped into a manageable database through a reduction process. The reduction process included questioning the data, identifying and noting common patterns in the data, creating codes that describe the data patterns, and assigning these coded pieces of information to the research questions (Creswell, 2007). Coding is a system of classification, identifying different segments of the data, and labeling them to organize the information contained in the data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

The interview data were analyzed using a phenomenological analysis process outlined by Moustakas (1994). First, the researcher developed a list of significant statements, sentences, or quotes that provided insights into participants' lived collaborative consumption experiences. Every statement was given equal value and weight, a process referred as horizontalization of the data, and each nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statement was listed in order to develop the structure of the data. Next, these significant statements were grouped into larger units of information, called "meaning units" or themes. Finally, the most eloquent quotations illustrating each of the themes were extracted and documented. This process of interpretation was repeated for data relevant to each of the seven research questions. In addition, the researcher reviewed the transcripts for themes across questions to discover concepts that were not addressed by existing questions.

Ethical Consideration

Throughout the analysis, the researcher attempted to avoid imposing a priori definitions and understandings on the data and remained open to the unexpected. All of the participants were treated in accordance to the ethical guidelines of the University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board (IRB). Although there were no identifiable risks for participating in this study, this study employed various safeguards to ensure the protection of participants. First, as noted previously, written consent to voluntarily proceed with the study was obtained from each participant. Second, participants' rights and interests were considered of primary importance when reporting and distributing the data. The researcher kept the names and other significant personal characteristics of the

participants confidential. To protect participants' identity, all the names were reported as pseudonyms. Every caution was taken to ensure that all participants felt safe, comfortable, and had the freedom to withdraw from the study at any point in time if they felt the need. Research related records and data were securely stored and nobody other than the researcher had access to them.

Issues of Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, researchers think in terms of trustworthiness as opposed to the traditional quantitative criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Padgett, 1998). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggested that four factors should be considered in establishing the trustworthiness of findings from qualitative research: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability.

Credibility refers to whether the findings are accurate and believable from the perspective of the researcher and the participants. Credibility of this study was achieved using the validation strategies of triangulation, thick rich description, and peer review. With regard to triangulation, the researcher gathered data from multiple sources through multiple methods such as interviews, website observation, field notes, and document reviews. Triangulation involves corroborating evidence from different sources, which allows the researcher to be confident of the study conclusions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Patton, 1980, 1990). Thick rich description was established by presenting the participants' voices under each theme and by reporting sufficient quotes and field note descriptions. Finally, the researcher asked professors and peers to provide critical

feedback on descriptions, analyses, and interpretations of findings. These individuals kept the researcher honest, asked hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations, and acted as “devil’s advocates” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability refers to the stability and consistency of the findings. In qualitative research, “reliability” often corresponds to the stability of responses to multiple coders of data sets (Creswell, 2007). For reliability purposes, intercoder reliability (see Miles & Huberman, 1994) was performed by hiring a second coder to compare code segments and interpretation of the data. Inconsistent codings were identified, discussed, and negotiated until agreement was obtained. The reliability of coding was determined by dividing the number of agreements by the total number of units. The calculation of reliability was .967. In addition, the researcher used an audit trail that documented the rationale for all decisions made during the research process. This trail examines the data collection and analysis procedures and makes judgments about potential bias or distortion (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings (Patton, 1990, p. 489). To establish transferability, the researcher attempted to thoroughly present findings with thick, rich descriptions of the participants and the context. Depth, richness, and detailed description provide the basis for application to broader contexts (Schram, 2003).

The concept of confirmability corresponds to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. The researcher documented the procedures for

checking and rechecking the data throughout the study. Ongoing reflection in journals, field notes, and in transcripts demonstrated confirmability.

In summary, this chapter provided a detailed description of this study's research methodology. A phenomenological approach was employed to illustrate the phenomenon of collaborative consumption. Purposive sampling method was used to recruit participants and in-depth interviews were performed to collect data. Transcribed data were analyzed and reviewed. Trustworthiness of this study was explained through various strategies, including triangulation, thick rich description, and peer review.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the key findings obtained from conducting in-depth interviews. The chapter contains a summary of participants' characteristics followed by findings with respect to each research question.

Participants' Characteristics

To recruit a range of participants, users of eight different collaborative consumption websites (i.e., NeighborGoods.net, Bagborrowworsteal.com, Renttherunway.com, Swap.com, Swapstyle.com, Thredup.com, TaskRabbit.com, and Skillshare.com) were contacted. After distributing 137 email invitations, a total of 30 collaborative consumers (29 women, 1 man) volunteered to participate and share their experiences. These 30 participants were current users of three online collaborative consumption websites: Renttherunway.com, Thredup.com, and TaskRabbit.com. Eight participants engaged in product service system (i.e., renting), sixteen individuals were involved in redistribution market system (i.e., swapping), and six individuals represented participants in collaborative lifestyle system (i.e., sharing skills). None of the participants used more than one system of collaborative consumption.

Participants were between the ages of 19 to 44 and were located in various regions throughout the United States. Most of the participants ($n = 27$) defined themselves as Caucasian. Two thirds of the participants ($n = 20$) were married/living with a partner. The rest ($n = 10$) were single. The majority of the participants ($n = 20$) indicated they completed some college or had a four-year college degree, six participants

had a post graduate degree, and four participants indicated they had a high school diploma.

Participants shared that they first learned about the collaborative consumption websites they used from a variety of sources including their family members, friends, through Facebook, blogs, articles, or website advertising and promotions. At the time of data collection, the length of time participants reported using their collaborative consumption websites ranged from three months to two and a half years. Participants were mostly satisfied with their experiences and were willing to continue using the collaborative consumption website. Detailed information regarding participants' demographic characteristics is presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Participants' Demographic Information

CC System	Participant	Age	Location	Education	Marital Status	Length of CC Use
Product Service System	1	19	FL	High School	Married	1 year
	2	28	CA	4-year college	Single	1 ½ years
	3	24	NY	4-year college	Single	6 months
	4	25	NY	2-year college	Single	3 months
	5	27	LA	4-year college	Single	1 year
	6	26	CA	4-year college	Single	6 months
	7	34	MI	4-year college	Married	5 months
	8	31	IL	4-year college	Single	10 months

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Participants' Demographic Information

CC System	Participant	Age	Location	Education	Marital Status	Length of CC Use
Redistribution Market	9	23	NC	2-year college	Married	1 ½ years
	10	34	FL	High School	Married	1 ½ years
	11	32	WA	4-year college	Married	2 years
	12	40	OH	Post graduate	Married	1 ½ years
	13	30	OH	High School	Married	2 years
	14	31	IN	Post graduate	Married	2 years
	15	29	MN	4-year college	Married	8 months
	16	37	NJ	2-year college	Married	2 years
	17	36	NY	Post graduate	Married	6 months
	18	27	NY	2-year college	Married	2 years
	19	35	NY	2-year college	Married	2 ½ years
	20	37	TN	4-year college	Married	2 ½ years
	21	36	PA	Post graduate	Married	1 year
	22	32	NC	High school	Married	1 ½ years
	23	34	CA	2-year college	Married	1 year
	24	44	AZ	4-year college	Married	10 months

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Participants' Demographic Information

CC System	Participant	Age	Location	Education	Marital Status	Length of CC Use
Collaborative Lifestyle	25	23	CA	4-year college	Single	1 ½ years
	26	23	CA	4-year college	Single	1 ½ years
	27	31	CA	2-year college	Single	6 months
	28	25	NY	2-year college	Single	1 year
	29	32	WA	Post graduate	Married	9 months
	30	33	IL	Post graduate	Married	1 year

Collaborative Consumption Experience

The first research question sought to document consumers' overall experiences with collaborative consumption. Participants were asked to share their experiences with the collaborative consumption process: before, during, and after along with what they considered to be their most successful and unsuccessful experiences.

Collaborative consumption process.

Product service system. All participants were users of the RenttheRunway website. RenttheRunway (RTR) provides access to designer clothing (primarily dresses) and accessories to their customers at a reduced cost (i.e., less than regular retail prices). Customers pick a garment on the site that they would like to wear, schedule a delivery date, and RTR sends two sizes of the same garment to the customer. Two garments are sent to ensure fit.

Participants indicated that they rented from RTR for special occasions including weddings, holiday parties, formal events, and religious ceremonies (e.g., baptism). Because the dress was for a special occasion and the renting process was solely done online, participants shared that they often had concerns about the design and fit of the dress. To resolve this issue, some participants visited department stores to actually see and feel the dresses as well as to test the size and fit before they rented online. Participant 2, for example, first heard about RTR from a close friend and had rented four dresses from RTR for a wedding and holiday events. She shared that her process was to check the RTR website to see what dresses were available to rent approximately two months before the event. Next, she visited a brick and mortar store to check the design and fit of the dresses she was interested in before ordering them from RTR.

For me, when renting, I do like to stick to brands that know my body type. For example, 3 of the 4 dresses that I've rented from them [RTR] were by Badgley Mischka. Before I made the official commitment to rent in the first place, I went to try on Badgley Mischka dresses at Nordstrom just to get a feel for the sizing. That way I could feel more comfortable renting a size from RTR that was going to be something I had already tried on from a store. (Participant 2)

During the decision making process, RTR provided customers with various high-end clothing options and services that could reduce their worries about the selecting the right design, size, and fit. RTR offered its customers a backup size because they send two sizes with each order. Customers also had the option of asking for advice from RTR's

stylists to help them with selecting the right dress and accessories. Participant 3 who had eight rentals with RTR highlighted her experience with RTR stylists.

I have always been helped out by people [stylist] who are super helpful and nice. They understand that you want to look good for whatever event and they care about getting you in the right dress on time! I recently rented a backless dress from them and they offered to have one of their stylists pick out earrings to go with my dress for \$15! I went for it, and was thrilled with their choice. The earrings (the Finley Golden earrings, for the record) were something I wouldn't have picked for myself, but ended up loving! (Participant 3)

Participants also found picture reviews posted by former renters on the RTR website very helpful (See Figure 1). Participant 7 first rented a dress from RTR for her engagement party. She shared that she wanted something special for her party and recounted her experience with RTR and her ability to judge size and fit from the photographs of the previous renters.

They had over 300 photos of other girls wearing this dress [the dress she was interested in] that they'd uploaded themselves. Plus those girls wrote their height, size, bust, and a review of the dress' overall fit. So I immediately knew how it would probably fit my body. Also, they let you order a second size for free! Since they said the dress runs big, I ordered my normal size and a smaller size just in case. (Participant 7)

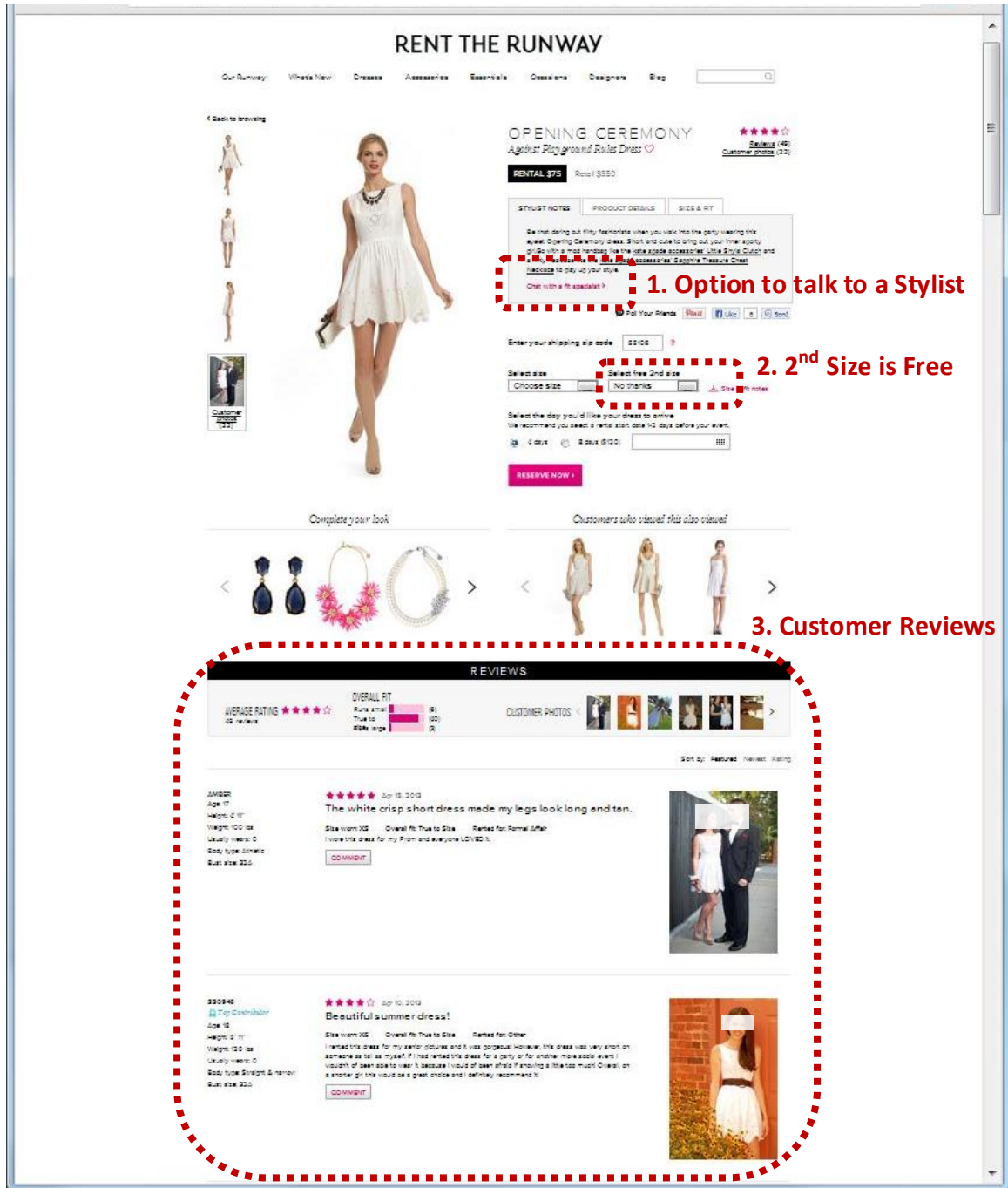
Participants noted how easy the return process was after they had worn a dress. The return process entailed placing the garment in a pre-paid envelope provided by RTR. Participants did not have to clean the dresses before sending them back to RTR.

After I was done, I just put the dresses in the envelope and popped them in the mail. No dry cleaning, nothing! Much easier than dragging something to the dry cleaners! (Participant 1)

To build their relationship with customers and encourage their involvement, RTR offered interesting promotions including referral programs and a fashion favorite of the week contest. The referral program encouraged users to refer their friends. If a person was successful, he or she earned \$20 for each person who completed a first rental. The fashion favorite of the week contest featured one user, of all those who entered, who sent photos of themselves wearing the rented dress. One individual was selected and that person was praised on social media or in an email in addition to receiving an incentive (e.g., discount coupon). Participant 2 described that when she was chosen as RTR's fashion favorite of the week, she became loyal to RTR and referred many of her friends to them.

The recognition was nice. I felt like they received so many pictures of girls and feeling "chosen" from all the others was good! They put me on their social media outlet and I believe their eblast [An e-mail message that is sent out to a large mailing list]. I also received a discount code for a future rental. (Participant 2)

Figure 1. RenttheRunway Website Services to Ensure Fit



Redistribution market. Participants in this system were all users of ThredUp.

ThredUp was a children's clothing exchange website that enabled parents to swap their children's outgrown or unwanted clothes with other parents. In the process of swapping goods, participants experienced both being a sender and a recipient. Basically, as a recipient, they selected a box on the website and paid the listed box price and shipping charges. As a sender, they prepared a box of clothing. Preparation entailed listing the clothing items contained in the box on a community forum (Daily thred). If someone indicated he or she wanted the box, senders shipped it to the person. Even though the process appears simple, participants shared there were many steps that they went through in order to swap goods.

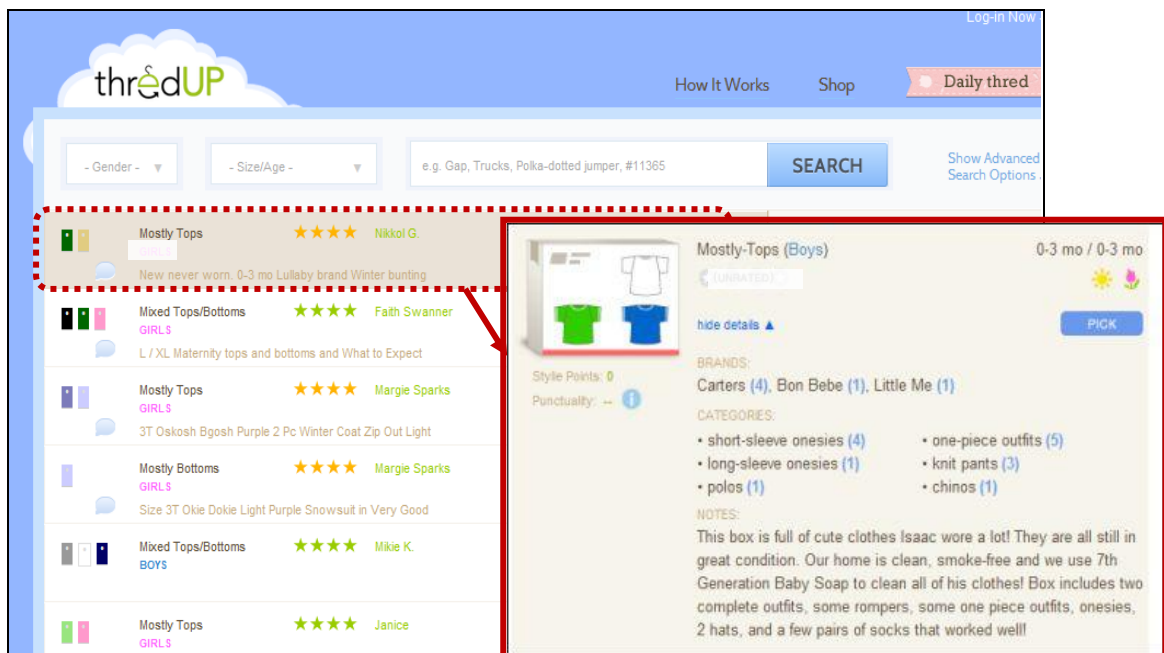
As senders, participants underwent a preparation process before the actual swapping occurred. This process included cleaning the clothing, sorting items after inspection, taking pictures, posting pictures on the website with detailed descriptions, and responding to potential recipients' questions. Participant 14 who is a mother of two children has been sending out at least six boxes a month since 2011. She described her preparation process as follows.

Everything has already been washed when I begin sorting. I pull what my daughter is no longer using that I'm ready to get rid of. I then photograph items individually (I take a photo of the item and of the tag so I will know the brand and size). I then upload it to the computer and post the pictures with information ...if they have any wear or if they run smaller than other brands. I always inspect the clothing as well - if it's too worn it goes to donations. (Participant 14)

ThredUp did not allow users to upload pictures in their forum. Thus, it was necessary for users to provide detailed descriptions about what they were swapping (See Figure 2). Participant 20 recounted her way of listing items on the “Daily thred.”

On ThredUp, they didn’t allow pictures!! So I had to describe everything. It took forever. When I post I made sure to mention “non smoking, pet friendly house.” It was something that a lot of people didn’t do and some people have allergies and nobody wants a box full of hair and smoke! (Participant 20)

Figure 2. ThredUp Website Daily Thred Posts and a Detailed Description of a Post



Instead of allowing users to post pictures on the website, ThredUp had a link to their Facebook page where users could post pictures and communicate with each other. Facebook became an outlet for parents to exchange information not only about swapping but also about their daily life.

ThredUp did not provide moms to post their photos on their site so I always went to Facebook. I imagine that was a huge reason why the Facebook page was so popular...such a great place. Once the community was built, I think it thrived, even for the few weeks that they added photos and still had swapping, people still “hung out” on the Facebook wall. (Participant 21)

Once their box was selected by a recipient, most participants made sure the items were clean before they sent their box to the recipient. Participants noted that in addition to the items listed on their posting, they tried to fill up the box with extra items as a surprise as often as possible. Participants often included personal notes or cards in the box for the recipient. Participant 15 had been swapping on ThredUp for about eight months and during that time she had received eight boxes and sent out about 10 boxes. She indicated that she added special notes in the box to connect with the receiver and to show appreciation.

Even though the clothes were clean. I usually wash them again or wash them with like Oxyclean because they give them an extra smell. Um, I always like to stuff the box in full because I appreciate them getting them. I make sure all the clothes are tight. And on the box, I would always write a note like putting picture of my son wearing some of the clothes in the box. (Participant 15)

Similarly, participant 20 who had sent about 150 boxes shared that ThredUp encouraged its users to include special notes in their boxes perhaps to share a history of the item or to personalize the experience.

I would sometimes include letters. I would also include a special something for the kid or kids. Not just clothes. I love adding surprises to those boxes. ThredUp actually had things print with your labels at one point... pictures to color, or for the sender to draw. They also suggested writing something or even a poem! I think they were trying to add the personal aspect back into it. (Participant 20)

As a recipient, participants performed an extensive information search before making their box selection. They looked at the seller's ratings made by previous recipients, descriptions, and went on Facebook to look at the pictures of garments. Participants also contacted sellers if they had questions.

I looked for the persons' ratings and comments.... detailed descriptions and sizes/items I would need. I tried and found out as much of the information about an item as I could. I went to Google and researched it. ThredUp had a place you could ask questions, so I would do that in order to find out more information. (Participant 11)

Participant 15 highlighted the importance of connecting with people on Facebook. I try to get pictures or... like when I am doing ThredUp, most of the time I made a connection through Facebook. You know, the Facebook page before I actually swap boxes. I think that there is always danger that you will get inferior products so... stained clothes or broken furniture, especially over the Internet. Making connection with people, talking to them before you buy it, is very important. (Participant 15)

During the swapping process, participants shared that it could get very competitive. Some boxes contain popular sizes (size 2T and up) and brand names such as Gymboree and Gap that many mothers favored and contributed to their competing for the box. In order to get what they wanted, users needed to order the box as quickly as possible. Thus, participants visited the website regularly to check for new posts.

It gets very competitive! I've seen people argue about who claimed what first.

You have to be quick to get the good stuff! Specifically clothing sizes 2T and up are hard to come by. I check in as often as I can if I know I want to buy something and try to be the first to see. (Participant 18)

Some participants, normally young parents, used technology such as the alert system offered by the Facebook mobile application, to notify them every time a new post was uploaded.

I usually just keep my notifications on so I am alerted anytime anyone posts a picture and I can keep up with the website. (Participant 9)

After an exchange, users evaluated the swap and rated senders or wrote reviews. Some participants made a list of whom to avoid transactions with and some reported their bad experiences to ThredUp. Many participants indicated that, in general, they had built strong relationships with the people they swapped with and continued their contact with them through Facebook.

Many moms I know keep a list of who they will not pick a package from. There are some I will not pick from again, clothes had rips, stains, junk basically.

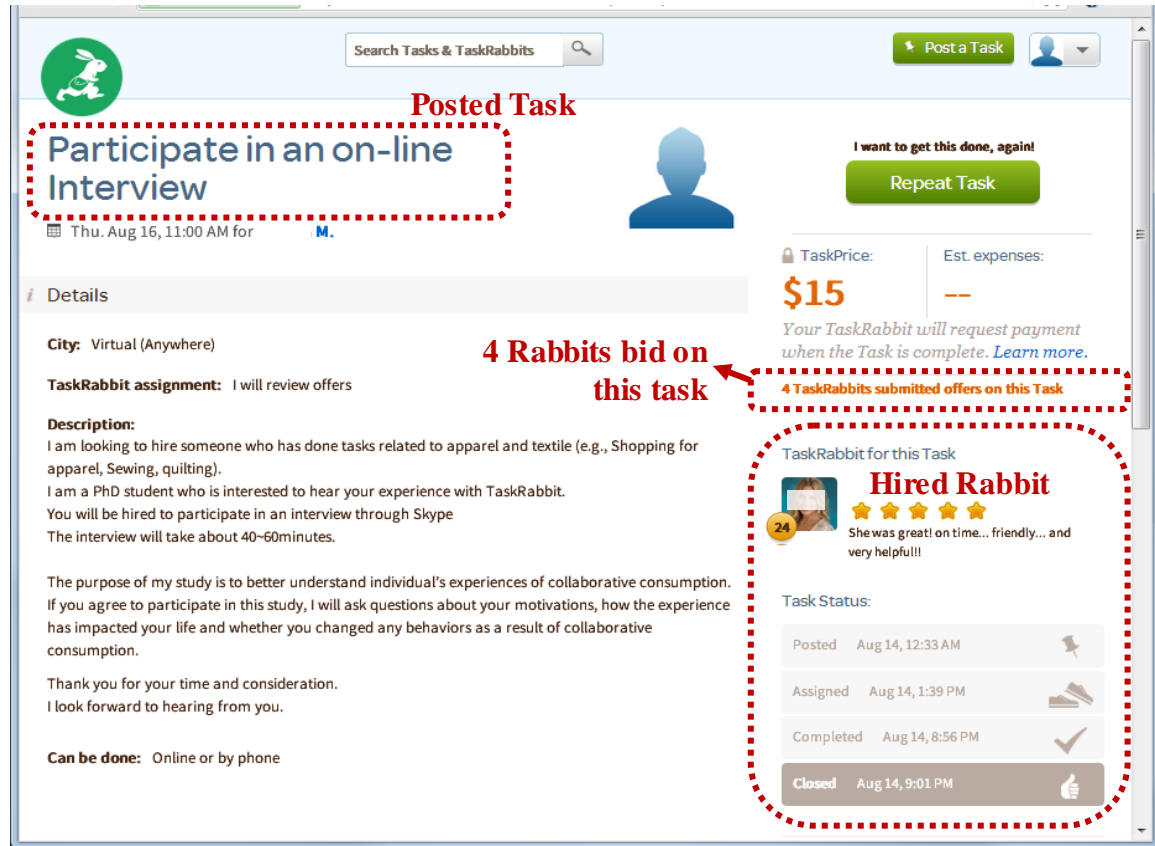
With shipping costing so much, the package needs to be full to make the swap worth swapping. (Participant 12)

Because of the Facebook page I would know the moms with the children in the similar sizes or my size so it was awesome to swap with them. Kind of like girlfriends but far away (Participant 13)

As of March 2012, ThredUp changed their business model from facilitating a peer-to-peer swapping service to a business-to-consumer consignment shop. After ThredUp terminated their swapping service, some participants continued using the website. Others stopped using it and created their own swapping group on Facebook.

Collaborative Lifestyle. TaskRabbit allows users (Posters) who are reluctant to do certain tasks to connect with people (Rabbits) who are willing to complete them. Posters post their task with a price range that they are willing to pay. Rabbits bid on doing the task. Then, the posters select a Rabbit to complete their task using several criteria including the price of their bid, experience and skill set, level of points (an indication of Rabbits' level of experience), and ratings from previous tasks. (See Figure 3).

Figure 3. User's Task Post Example on TaskRabbit Website



All participants in the collaborative lifestyle were task Rabbits who had completed fashion related tasks including personal shopping for apparel and sewing. In addition, they completed tasks such as virtual tasks (e.g., completed online reviews, survey), delivery, and cleaning. They shared that it was easy for them to find tasks and they normally did multiple tasks per week. One participant in particular completed about three tasks per day on average.

To become a Rabbit, an individual first filled out his/her information on an application form, completed a webcam automated interview, and went through a background check. Once the individual received approval from TaskRabbit, he/she can

start bidding on posted tasks. The TaskRabbit website provides a space for Rabbits to write their profile, records tasks that have been completed, and display ratings and reviews. Written information on Rabbits was a good way to highlight skills and abilities and attract task posters to select one Rabbit over others.

When Rabbits identified an applicable task they want to complete, they bid on the task/ job taking into consideration the amount of time involved, the nature of the work, and what their time was worth. Often, getting tasks (winning a bid) was competitive. Virtual tasks that could be completed remotely, such as virtual data entry, research studies, editing, and internet searching, were the most sought after tasks by Rabbits. To be competitive, participants checked the website regularly and also received notifications of new applicable tasks from TaskRabbit on their phone. Participant 26 shared that she checked the site about five times a day to see if there were any tasks she would like to complete.

Bidding was a significant part of the process and participants had different bidding strategies that worked for them in their quest to win the task. Having good reviews from previous tasks served as references for the task poster.

I bid based on how much work I expect it will take and how many hours I can finish it in. If it takes less than 30 minutes, I usually bid less than 15 dollars. However, I have good reviews so that sometimes helps people when choosing. They tend to choose someone who has good reviews, over someone who has horrible reviews. (Participant 26)

It depends on the difficulty and if it is convenient with my schedule. I try to underbid other Rabbits if the job is easy, convenient, close by. (Participant 27)

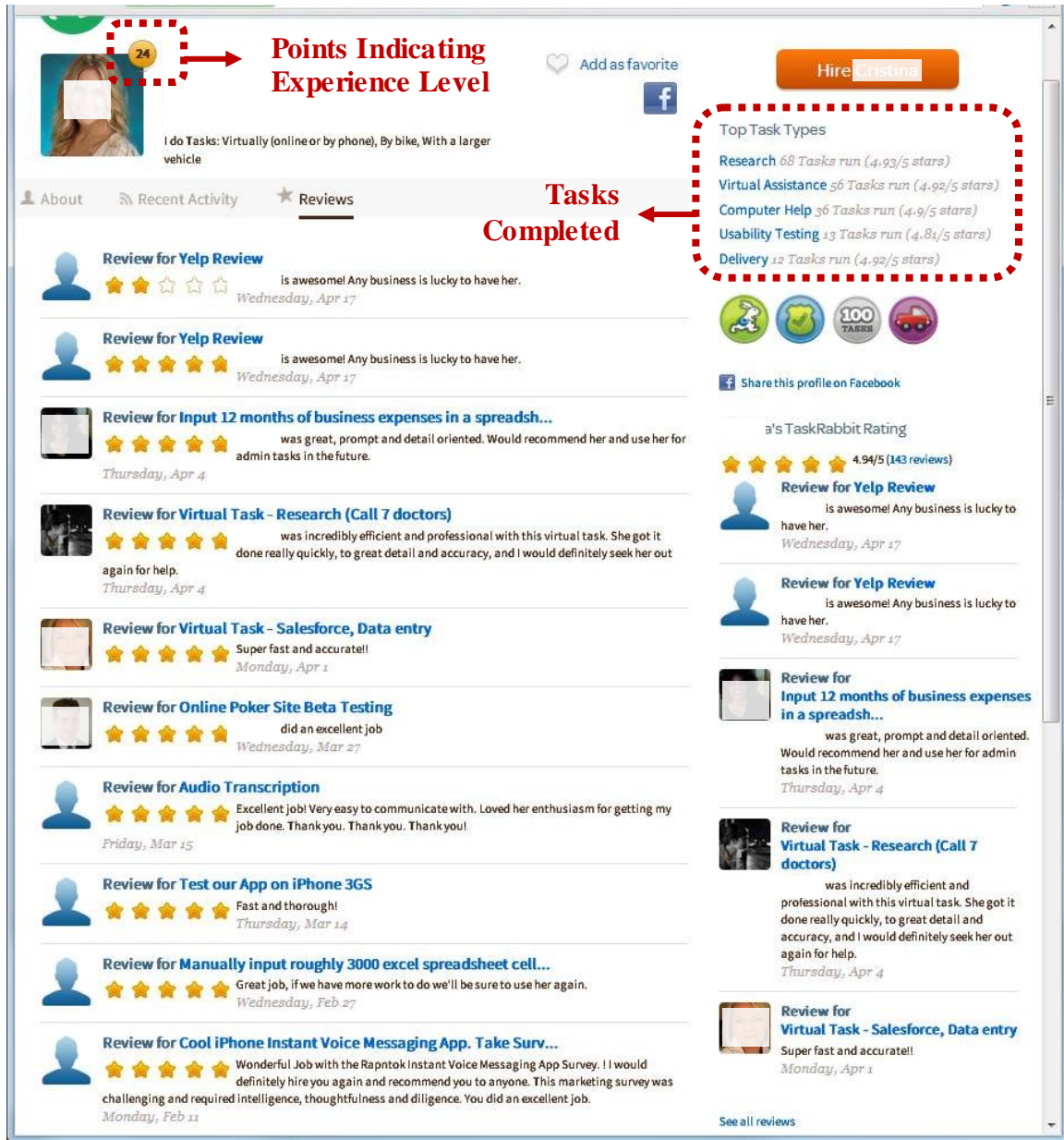
Based on an estimate of how many hours the task will take. If it is a large project, I will bid less per hour, but if it will only take an hour or two, I'll bid a higher hourly rate (Participant 28)

After a task was completed, participants shared that they asked the task poster to complete a review. Rabbits considered the review system to be very important to getting the tasks they found attractive. The TaskRabbit website also had a point system indicating the experience level of a Rabbit. Rabbits could earn points by receiving good reviews and completing the tasks (See Figure 4).

The researcher asked whether participants kept in contact with the task posters after completing a task. With few exceptions, task Rabbits did not make contact with the poster again. One Rabbit kept in contact with a poster for a sewing task because the poster asked the individual to repeat the same task.

The task was to sew a phone case inside a pillow case. The guy was so happy with my work, he has hired me two more times for the same task, but with slight variations. (Participant 27)

Figure 4. TaskRabbit Reviews and Ratings



Successful and unsuccessful experiences. Participants were asked to share their successful and unsuccessful collaborative consumption experiences. Most participants (n

= 28) considered their experiences with collaborative consumption to be successful.

However, there were some unsuccessful instances that were shared by participants.

Successful experiences. When participants were asked about their most successful experiences with collaborative consumption, some participants' responses focused on the product they collaboratively consumed, some on the relationship, and others on the entertainment. These groups of responses were labeled product focused, relationship focused, and entertainment focused respectively.

Product focused. In this category of responses, participants evaluated their experience as successful because of their high level of satisfaction with the products they collaboratively consumed. For example, Participant 14 shared her most successful swapping experience to be the time she received a box full of items she liked and fit her daughter and herself.

I received an awesome box of clothing for myself and my daughter one time, had a purse that was perfect for me (still using it), blazer and some other clothing that fit perfectly. I also got my daughter's Halloween costume in a box. It was so adorable, fit perfectly and the mom added some extras in - one which was a baby doll my daughter still sleeps with. (Participant 14)

Participant 20 also recalled her most successful swapping experience to be when she received many brand-name clothes in exchange for a small amount of money.

My most successful swap would have to be with a lady A. The box I bought had a Banana Republic dress NWT, GAP jeans, JCrew dress pants, another designer

label dress NWT. There had to be at least 15 items in the box. I was so thrilled to have gotten everything for \$15. It rocked!! (Participant 20)

In the context of renting, receiving the right product for less and getting compliments from others made participants feel their CC experience was successful. Many participants in product service systems indicated that getting compliments from friends and strangers confirmed their choice of the product (dress) was successful. This perspective is reflected in comments from Participant 2 and 8 as they described successful CC experiences.

I'd say my New Years Eve experience was successful. I chose to rent the gold Badgley Mischka gown that is my Facebook profile picture and received so much good feedback on that. I've never felt more beautiful in a dress! (Participant 2)

I was a bridesmaid in my best friend's wedding. She chose mismatched yellow dresses for her bridesmaids and I have to admit I was nervous leading up to the wedding having not tried the dress! I flew in from Hong Kong, had the dresses on my doorstep, and couldn't have been happier. I rented 3 to be safe, and one of the other bridesmaid's ditched a dress she had planned months in advance to wear one of my other rentals! I rented 4 dresses for four events throughout the wedding and spent less on all rentals combined than I would have on one purchase! I was stunned and happy with everything! (Participant 8)

Relationship focused. For some participants, their successful experience was related to building relationships or bonding with others. This perspective was prevalent in responses from those who participated in a redistribution market system. Swapping

brought them joy as they shared they knew that they were helping other families in need and that they were getting help from others when they needed it.

It makes me feel good that I know it is going back to someone and knowing that they can benefit from the swap. Helping out and having it returned are always the best swapping experiences and what I view as successful. (Participant 9)

Participants 17 shared her successful swap to be when she was able to help another mother who was in need of something that her own children did not use.

I think working with a like-minded mom is important. I know people that have send surprise packages to people just to be nice. I sent a woman an envelope with 5 Play Station2 games and some other stuff. She told me [on Facebook] that she wanted them for her son's birthday. I felt good about helping her out. Yeah...it's nice to have other mom friends out there. We help each other out. (Participant 17)

Through exchanging things and constantly communicating with each other online, participants formed new relationships. For some participants, a swap that helped build a new relationship with another person was remembered as a successful swapping experience. Participants 18 shared her successful experience as follows.

My most successful swap was with the girl who became one of my best friends. I first swapped with her a year ago and we speak every day, all day! That all started with a box of clothes and toys and now we send birthday gifts. (Participant 19)

In the context of skill sharing, one participant recounted his successful experience to be the time he helped the poster with his business.

I worked with a web/graphic designer and assembled a list of potential clients in his area in order to grow his business. This task was memorable because I could recognize the direct impact I was having on his business by helping him reach new clients. (Participant 25)

Entertainment focused. Some participants in the collaborative lifestyle system thought their successful CC experience was when they had fun completing the task or learned something from it. They viewed a successful task as one that they enjoyed doing. Comments made by participant 26 and 29 reflect this perspective.

My successful and most favorite task was to go to Hermes on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills and see what type of Hermes bags they had available! He [TaskPoster] was looking for get a purse for his wife, and had been in and out of Hermes stores around LA and he couldn't call and check availability so he needed someone to go for him. (Participant 26)

I actually worked a task for TaskRabbit at their Wedding Expo and got paid \$100 for 2 hours! It was really fun and I learned a lot about TaskRabbit while working for their booth. (Participant 29)

There was evidence that successful experiences resulted in positive word-of-mouth. Participants who reflected their experience as successful shared that they try to advocate collaborative consumption by sharing their experiences with others including their families, friends, and the general public. They often shared by linking the CC website or posting their experience on their Facebook page. Participants 10 and 15 indicated their endeavors to support CC as follows.

I can get carried away talking about it. When my kids are wearing something I got a great deal on I boast about it. I've sucked friends into it. I told my mom about it and she gave me a bunch of her stuff to post too! (Participant10)

I think I am somewhat on the extreme end. If I can get friends to buy just one or two things used or pass on their old things instead of throwing them in the trash, it's a success. I also think that being public about collective consumption (linking it in with Facebook or telling people when you get a great find) just helps to normalize it so people feel more comfortable with it. It's a bit like peer pressure.

If they see others doing it, they will be more likely to try it. (Participant 15)

Unsuccessful experiences. Participants were also asked about their most unsuccessful CC experience. In describing their unsuccessful experiences, participants' responses centered on two areas: failure of a product or bad customer service. In the context of product service systems, only one participant had a bad experience. Participant 8 rented a dress for a New Year's Eve party but she received an email from RTR that her dress was out of stock just a day before the party. RTR customer service told her that they would be sending compatible dresses for her but she did not like the two dresses they sent. Participant 8 considered this experience an unpleasant experience because of the bad timing and late notification. She pointed out that customer service personnel reacted too late, were hard to reach, and above all charged her for the dress she originally ordered but never wore.

In the context of swapping, unsuccessful experiences were primarily related to product failures. The produce was deemed a failure if the product was different from the product pictured, did not fit, or was not clean.

The worst one was a lady who had taken pictures of the clothes, which in the pictures they were really nice looking. When I got them, it was horrible.

Everything but 1 item had stains, and not little ones that could be overlooked, but big stains! I just did not pick from her again. (Participant 23)

As reflected in Participant 23's comment, participants avoided interacting with senders after one unsuccessful experience with them. In addition, participants shared they left reviews on the website as well as on Facebook which they believed influenced the decision making of other people who could then avoid getting items from those senders.

I always review honestly. Afterwards someone told me they had a similar experience with the same person and was too upset to review. Had I saw that review I would have never picked a box from those people. I always made sure to review the senders. (Participant 19)

There were opportunities in some instances to get resolution with unsuccessful experiences. Participant 19 shared that after receiving credit from ThredUp for a bad box she received, it was not that big of a deal anymore.

Well, I can say that one times that made me unhappy was really not that bad in the end. I picked a box of clothing for my son, they came smelly and stained. But I contacted ThredUp and they credited me. No big deal. (Participant 19)

Conversely, Participant 20 described that her disappointment increased when the customer service failed to respond to her problem.

When I received a box, a couple pairs of pants had holes in the knees or dirt stained knees. It also only had about 6 pairs of pants in it...far from stuffed.

I was disappointed because I didn't feel like I got my money's worth. The value was not there at all. ThredUp wasn't great with customer service when it came to bad boxes. Their answer was to leave a bad review. Big flaw in their system with that. (Participant 20)

In the context of collaborative lifestyle, an unsuccessful experience was related to the task that a Rabbit had bid on turned out to be both tedious and stressful. For example, participant 26 shared that she bid on managing a guest list at an event which was very stressful. Hence for her, it was an unsuccessful task.

Motivations for Collaborative Consumption

Motivations for collaborative consumption refer to psychological states that induce and direct consumers to collaboratively consume (Woolfolk, 1995). Participants were asked what motivations underlie their experience with collaborative consumption. Five motivational themes emerged from participant's responses and were labeled economical, functional, environmental, social, and personal.

Economical motivation. Economical motivation was the most prominent motivation to collaboratively consume and was also the most salient to participants. Economical motivations included a desire to pay less and gain value, an obligation to save money, and to earn money.

To pay less and gain value. Many participants engaged in collaborative consumption with the goal of saving money by paying less for items than they were worth. Most of the participants in the product service system shared they rented online to gain access to a high-end designer dress for a fraction of its cost. Moreover, considering that dresses are normally worn once for a special occasion, this practice made it unreasonable for participants to purchase an expensive dress when they could rent the same dress for 10% of its original price. As reflected in Participant 3's comment, renting online was a way for her to wear a trendy designer dress but not have to pay for the full cost of the dress.

I love to get a deal and spend as little as possible. I paid \$50 to rent a really nice dress for a whole weekend! If I bought it in Bloomies it would have cost me around \$300. The dress was very trendy and I probably would have worn it just once anyway. (Participant 3)

Participant 2 described herself as a person who did not like to get photographed wearing the same dress twice. Thus, renting was a good option for her so that she was wearing a new dress every time she got her photo taken at a special occasion event.

Renting for me is an option to get a dress, get as many photos taken as possible and then give it back. There's no need for me to have tons of designer dresses in my closet if I only want to wear them once. (Participant 2)

Desire to pay less and gain value was also a common motivation in the context of using a redistribution market. The comments made by Participants 19 and 22 best describe how swapping children's clothes online is a way to spend less on things that are

needed for a short period time and gain value (i.e., obtain many different children's clothing items by paying less than full price).

In the reverse, why spend \$20 on a new baby outfit that you know your child will wear once or twice when you can swap and get a bunch of outfits for that \$20?

You are helping your wallet and maybe someone else's wallet too. (Participant 19)

Well, I lost my job back in June of 2011 and after that, we had to figure out ways to save money. My daughter hits these growth spurts so often that we have to, almost constantly, buy her new clothes. Doing it on sites like ThredUp gives me the chance to save money while still getting nice clothes. (Participant 22)

For some participants, participating in collaborative consumption eased the pressure place on the clothing budget by enabling them to satisfy their basic needs without sacrificing less crucial needs. Obtaining goods through collaborative consumption allowed these participants to allocate their saved money to obtaining other things.

It's a lot cheaper! I just got a huge envelop of Fall clothes plus a pair of ballet shoes and some leotards for my daughter and it cost \$10. Plus, the money I make swapping is what I use to buy new stuff so it's technically no cost to me.

(Participant 17)

Obligation to save money. Fulfilling their family's needs and saving money was especially important for mothers working within tight budgets. Swapping was a good solution for those mothers. For them saving money was an obligation. Many mothers in

redistribution market system expressed that they had an obligation to save money for their family. Participant 9 was a stay-at-home mom with two children. She shared that before having children she used to only buy high-end brands but now she has adapted to her revised role as a mom and a wife and started to swap as a means to contribute to the household income.

My husband does not get paid worth crap. His employer hasn't given anyone a raise (to include cost of living adjustments) in over 5 years. I was in school up until recently, and I saw this as a way to contribute to the household. That, and all the other stuff I do as Mom and a wife. Doing the swapping helps out a lot financially. (Participant 9)

Participant 11 was also a stay-at-home mom who started swapping right after she gave birth to her daughter. She shared that she felt the need to do her part as a wife to find ways to save money. Following was her response to why she collaboratively consumed.

To save money! My husband works very hard and we don't have a ton of extra income and he affords for me to stay home and raise our daughter. I try to do my part by saving as much as I can on the items we do need. Swapping helps save money by swapping out the things I don't need any more for the items I do need. (Participant 11)

To earn money. Another dimension of economical motivation was to earn money. For some participants, collaborative consumption was a means to make money. This dimension was most prominent in the collaborative lifestyle where participants shared

their skills with others online. One participant indicated that her intention to share her skills was to earn income after she lost her full-time job. Especially for college students, sharing skills was a good way to earn extra money. Participant 26 shared that when she was finishing up her last year of college, she was working full-time from nine to five. However, she was not satisfied with the pay she received compared to the time she spent working. She started looking for another way to make money without leaving her home and found TaskRabbit. She typically completed three tasks per day. She revealed that she was making more money being a Rabbit than being employed full-time at her previous job.

Motivation to earn money was also present in responses from participants who swapped. There were several participants who shared that there were some mothers who engaged in swapping to earn money. Although it was not mentioned by participants as a motivation, there was some evidence that some people sold the items they had received from swapping with others, especially branded goods, on auction sites. Participant 17 shared that some of the women she knew did this (swapping and then selling) as their job.

Functional motivation. Some participants engaged in collaborative consumption because it met their functional needs. For instance, collaborative consumption websites were convenient; easy to use and accessible 24/7 without location boundaries. Participants described their reason to rent a dress was because of convenience.

For convenience. Collaborative consumption websites provided services for its customers to rent, swap, or share skills conveniently with one another. For example, RenttheRunway provided an easy way to rent a dress and return it after use. Normally,

when consumers purchase a dress, they have to properly care for the dress including cleaning it and storing it. However, if consumers rent a dress, they can change their look whenever they please without having to spend time, space, or money to clean or store the dress. Participant 5's comment best illustrates this perspective.

It's so easy to order the dress and return it. You don't even have to bother cleaning the dress- you just throw it in the prepaid packaging and drop it in the mailbox on the next business day. Also, I remember one time I rented a dress and the hook-and-eye was broken. I called them right away and they offered to give me a refund or deliver another dress that day. I opted to get another dress and the messenger literally brought another dress a few hours later. Amazing! Talk about exceptional customer service. (Participant 5)

In the swapping context, one participant specifically indicated that she swapped online because of its convenience. Participant 16 was a stay-at-home mom with a one year old son. She share that she was disabled and could not drive. For her, swapping was a way to shop at her convenience and save money.

I have the convenience of shopping for great things for my family from my couch. It's like having stores in my living room to shop at whenever I want!! (Participant 16)

To reduce clutter. Researchers have documented that decluttering was an important motivation to donate clothing and engage in non-monetized exchanges (Ha-Brookshire, Hodges, 2009; Nelson, Rademacher, & Paek , 2007). Similarly, some participants considered collaborative consumption to be a convenient way to reduce

clutter. This motive was apparent in both the product service system and redistribution market. In the product service system, participants could reduce or prevent clutter by not buying goods that they planned to use only once or twice. In a redistribution market, participants could reduce or remove clutter by swapping out the items that were stored and not in use. Participants 3 and 16 described how collaborative consumption was a way to reduce clutter for participants in both systems.

The whole draw for me is that I will have an event to go to and spend anywhere from \$50-\$300 for a dress and end up wearing it once or maybe twice and then it gathers dust in my closet. If it is an amazing dress, people will remember it and it will be in all your pictures, and if it is crappy...well you won't wear it again.

(Participant 3)

I love getting stuff out of my house and having it used and appreciated by others.

My daughter had some really cute outfits that I want others to wear since we don't need them. Gets rid of stuff in my house, I make money to buy new stuff!

Win!Win! (Participant 16)

Environmental motivation. There were several participants who indicated that they collaboratively consumed to help the environment. An environmental motivation was only mentioned by participants in the redistribution market. Those participants purposely engaged in swapping with friends and strangers as it was their philosophical choice to swap and buy used to reduce waste. This perspective was best illustrated by remarks from Participant 19.

I think that products are made for longer term use than one family can give them. Look at baby clothes for example. You get all these cute things at your shower, and your baby will wear each thing once, maybe twice. Then you save your favorite and what do you do with the rest? Lots of people throw them out. That really increases our waste and our damage to the planet. I think swapping is a great way to introduce your family to a little bit of green living. What you can't use might be loved by someone else. Why not send it to them and feel good about it? (Participant 19)

Social motivation. Collaborative consumption was used as a means to give and receive social support. This social motivation was only prevalent with participants in the redistribution market.

Give or gain social support. Participants shared that swapping was about friends giving and receiving both tangible and intangible social support. Many mothers who swapped expressed that they like to help other mothers and make them feel happy. For example Participant 14 indicated that one of the big reasons for her to collaboratively consume was to help other mothers save money. Normally, those swaps resulted in receiving great reviews. Participant 20 also described how she loved the feedback she received from a receiver which made her feel good.

I like to help people and make them happy. It was great seeing a 4 star review on Facebook about how happy someone's child is about the things I sent. It makes me feel good. I have a chance to help someone and get things I need as well. (Participant 20)

Other participants engaged in swapping to receive help and support from other mothers. When mothers requested what they needed on the Facebook page, other mothers would help and send those items.

There was a lady who said she had my sizes (18 months to 2T) and I asked her to make me a box that I can use for going back to Scotland for holiday, she made me an amazing box of clothes, including a rain jacket. All higher end brands like Gymboree, Gap etc. (Participant 18)

I just sent a woman an envelope with five Play Station 2 games and some other stuff. She wanted them for her son's birthday. We help each other out. Yeah the women's envelope had five games that we no longer play....but then I just got an envelope sent to me that has brand new dance shoes for my daughter which I asked for so it all comes around. (Participant 17)

In addition to gaining material support, participants also shared that some mothers posted their personal life events on the Facebook page to gain emotional support. For example, Participant 9 shared how mothers sometimes looked for emotional support when they had problems or concerns using Facebook.

On Facebook, mothers usually post concerns or prayer requests if you are having a hard time. It makes it easy to get to know people. (Participant 9)

Personal motivation. Collaborative consumption was also motive by a desire to satisfying personal needs including keeping up-to-date with current fashion trends, gaining nostalgic pleasure when finding objects with stories, preparing for future needs,

and being entertained as well as becoming habituated or “addicted” to this form of consumption.

To keep up-to-date with fashion trends. Some participants engaged in collaborative consumption to participate in the latest fashion trends. This motive was only apparent in the product service system in which participants rented a range of new stylish dresses (over 60,000 dresses) and accessories online. Participant 6 described herself to be a frugal consumer, but for a black tie event she wanted something new and trendy to wear. She decided to rent online which she said was the best decision she made.

To gain nostalgic pleasure. In the context of redistribution market, one participant expressed her motivation to swap online was to obtain something that had a story behind it. As many swapping participants indicated that they included personal letters, notes, or photos of their children wearing the clothes they placed in a box, the swapped items become unique and attractive because they had a story.

I love when you get something that has a story behind it and especially when you get to hear the story. (Participant 15)

Participant 15 shared that she gets attached to things for their memories. There are items that she would never dispose of. She held on to things from her childhood (e.g., toys), things that were passed down to her from her grandparents (e.g., artwork, dresser), things that changed her life (e.g., books, movies), and her son’s toys and clothes from babyhood. As much as she liked to keep things with memories, she also liked to acquire things with other people’s memories.

To prepare for future needs. One participant in the redistribution market shared that she sometimes selected boxes to prepare for the future. In a swapping context, it can be difficult to find the exact item that you are looking for at the exact time you need it. Even if an individual actually finds what they want, one needs to act fast to obtain it because availability cannot be guaranteed. For popular items (e.g., sizes 2T and up), it could get very competitive. Participant 10 shared that she continues to engage in swapping to prepare for future needs.

I select items that I am or will be needing in the future. I check for stuff when I know I will be needing something. I also shop ahead for my children's growth so that I am prepared. (Participant 10)

For entertainment. This category includes statements about collaborative consumption being used to reduce boredom or to have fun. This motivation came from participants in the redistribution market. Participant 17 expressed that she swaps online for fun. Participant 21 also shared that she really enjoyed the bargain of getting a package full of items for the cost of shipping.

Addiction or habit. Collaborative consumption can become a habit and become addictive. This motivation was also only apparent in responses from participants in the redistribution market. Many participants shared that even though they did not have anything to swap, they checked the website regularly. They thought it was addictive. Comments made by Participants 15 and 19 best reflect this view.

I go on daily (except the weekends, we are too busy on the weekends). If I post new items, I'm on quite a bit. It is addictive, Very! I think that is partially because it's fun too! (Participant 19)

It's addictive really. I feel out of the loop if I'm gone for the weekend! I was even swapping when I was away at national conference for work...it was more interesting than work! (Participant 17)

In summary, there were some similarities and differences in motivations among participants in the three different collaborative consumption systems. Economical motivation was the most dominant motivation across all systems. Economical motivation was the only motivation shared from participants in the collaborative lifestyle while a greater variety of motivations seem to prevail for those participating in the redistribution market (i.e., economical, functional, environmental, social, personal). In the context of product service system, three motivations were evident (i.e., economical, functional, personal). Summary of motivations among three collaborative consumption systems can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Summary of Motivations among Three Collaborative Consumption Systems

Motivation theme	Product service system	Redistribution market	Collaborative lifestyle
Economical motivation			
To pay less and gain value	x	x	
Obligation to save money		x	
To earn money		x	x
Functional motivation			
For convenience	x	x	
To reduce clutter	x	x	
Environmental motivation		x	
Social motivation			
Give or gain social support		x	
Personal motivation			
To keep up-to-date with trend	x		
To gain nostalgic pleasure		x	
To prepare for future needs		x	
For entertainment		x	
Addiction or habit		x	

Benefits of Collaborative Consumption

Participants' responses yielded multiple benefits to practicing collaborative consumption. These benefits were grouped into five categories: financial benefit, social benefit, environmental benefit, functional benefit, and emotional benefit.

Financial benefit. The foremost benefit of collaborative consumption was financial. Collaborative consumption helped participants to lower costs and provided opportunities to save money. For participants in the product service system, renting

online provided them access to high quality designer dresses they could not easily afford and reduced the cost involved with owning and maintaining those dresses.

Instead of spending \$100 on a dress I'll never wear again, why not spend \$50 on a designer upgrade that would sell for \$500? (Participant 1)

I got so many compliments on a \$500 dress that I would never have spent \$500 for even if pigs were flying...and only paid \$55 instead. (Participant 6)

As Participant 1 and 6 noted, a dress for a special occasion is normally worn once or twice and there is a risk that the dress may go out of style quickly. Thus, instead of purchasing an expensive dress that may be worn infrequently, renting allowed participants to wear an expensive dress for a fraction of its original cost.

Maintaining quality clothing requires resources (e.g., time, money). For example, to maintain the quality of an expensive designer dress likely requires dry cleaning, ironing, and proper storage. However, if rented, participants did not have to deal with the cost involved with maintaining the clothing in good condition.

Similarly, in the context of the redistribution market, swapping benefited mothers financially and helped them save money on children's clothing which often was worn for a short period of time.

I think the number one benefit is cost. Kids grow so fast and you can find almost new items for a great deal. Since you have to buy constantly with them growing, I am sure I have saved \$1000s using swap sites. (Participant 18)

In the context of the collaborative lifestyle, participants who were Rabbits earned money by completing tasks. Some participants shared that they first planned to work as

Rabbits temporarily but with having financial difficulty (e.g., trouble finding a full-time job) or because of the amount of income they received from doing tasks, they continued to work as Rabbits.

Social benefit. Another benefit of collaborative consumption was related to social relationships and recognition. In the product service systems, participants commented on the benefit of getting social recognition by wearing beautiful dresses. Receiving compliments from people, both friends and strangers, was an important influence on participants when evaluating a successful renting experience. In contrast, participants in other collaborative consumption systems highlighted the benefit of socializing and giving or gaining social support.

Socializing. As illustrated in Participant 18's comment, online encounters, communicating about the items they swapped, their children, and family, often led to building strong relationships with other mothers.

The second major benefit is developing relationships with other moms, you can make some great friends and some mutually beneficial relationships. (Participant 18)

Like-minded mothers became "virtual friends." Knowing their tastes and situation, several participants in the redistribution market indicated that they preferred to swap only with the people that had become their friends.

Some I've even become "friends" with in a way and we know each other's tastes and I give them first dibs if I post something new. Plus, I have the people I know

that I like their stuff so I tend to buy from them again...unless something catches my eye. (Participant 17)

At least one friendship that was formed online through swapping expanded to an offline relationship. Some participants shared that after frequent swapping, they met each other in person.

We talk about our kids, birthday party ideas, etc. One woman I might even be meeting up with when she comes to DC for work this month! (Participant 17)

Participant 18 was originally from Scotland and came to the U.S. in 2010. She did not have any friends in the states. She first heard of ThredUp on a recycling paper and from then on swapping became a method to connect with other mothers in the U.S.

It was especially good for me because I had just moved to this country, I met some great mums and made some great friends as well, it becomes so much more than swapping. I first swapped with a girl who became one of my best friends a year ago and we speak every day, all day! That all started with a box of toys and now we send birthday gifts.... (Participant 18)

One participant in the collaborative lifestyle shared that one benefit he could think of from doing tasks was meeting interesting people. His future goal was to become a movie director and by doing tasks related to his interests he was able to meet people in the entertainment industry.

Giving or gaining support. For some participants in the redistribution market, swapping gave them an opportunity to renew faith in helping one another. Participants shared that swapping was about friends giving and receiving tangible and intangible

social support. Many mothers expressed that being able to help other mothers in the same situation as them was one of the important benefits of swapping.

Being able to help others out who are in the same, or worse positions than I am. If I hear of someone who is really bad off and I can get their address, I will send them stuff. Not only clothes but food items and other things that can be expensive. So I would have to say, being able to help others out! (Participant 22)

Other participants enjoyed gaining social help and support from other members when they received what they needed.

My daughters grew 7 inches last school year, so it was a huge help to have moms willing to help me out with clothes their kids had outgrown. It is amazing how generous the moms are. (Participant 12)

Swapping mothers may have first started to consume collaboratively for tangible things (i.e., kid's apparel) but as interaction continuously occurred, they shared intangibles including their knowledge, ideas, and concerns. The Facebook page was a virtual place where mothers met and shared their personal lives with each other and as a result, gained emotional support.

Environmental benefit. Participant 14 in the redistribution market specifically underlined the benefits of collaborative consumption to the environment. She indicated that collaborative consumption contributes to the environment by reducing waste and production.

It's good for the environment from the stand-point of theoretically, there is less trash and less need for new clothing. (Participant 14)

Functional benefit. Collaborative consumption provided functional benefits to participants such as convenience. The renting website offered an easy way to rent dresses and provided a variety of designer dresses and accessories featuring a range of styles and colors. Also, it presented its customers with personnel that could help them quickly if and when problems developed. Participants also shared that these websites provided a variety of choices. Participants liked the convenience of renting dresses without spending time having to go to a brick-and-mortar store as well as being able to return outfits without spending time and money on cleaning.

Because I'm usually pressed for time prior to an event, the last thing I want to do is fight intra-city traffic and hunt Magnificent Mile parking when I'm already stressed. (Participant 1)

After a night of endless compliments and feeling like a superstar, I put the dresses in the envelope and sent back! Much easier than dragging something to the dry cleaners! (Participant 5)

As stated by Participant 2, a variety of dresses from which to choose was another functional benefit for renters.

They're always adding a ton of new styles from different designers like Herve Leger and DVF. Fashion girls can never have too many options to choose from. And now that they have a lot more feedback from renters on the site, it is even easier to find the right dress and to know how it will fit. (Participant 3)

Participants involved in swapping shared the benefit of decluttering; being able to clean out their closets and utilize the things that they do not need to help others.

Being able to declutter my house. It gives me something to do with all my daughter's stuff! (Participant 11)

In the skill sharing context, Participant 29 shared the benefit of being able to utilize her skills and talents. She stated "I can use a wide variety of my own skills/talents for some things."

Emotional benefit. Emotional benefits such as feeling good and happy were outcomes resulting from participation in collaborative consumption. Participants in the product service system felt great after getting compliments from others about their rented dresses.

Dress was absolutely wonderful! I felt like a movie star and got so many compliments on it. (Participant 6)

Participants using the redistribution market expressed the joy they experienced when sharing. They were happy when they received a box full of great items and also when they made others feel happy by sending them their items. Participants in the collaborative lifestyle shared they felt good when they completed their task(s) successfully and received good reviews. In addition, collaborative consumption itself was simply a fun activity for some participants. (Table 3 presents collaborative consumption benefits identified by participants in each of the three different collaborative consumption systems.)

Table 3

Summary of Collaborative Consumption Benefits

Benefits	Product service system	Redistribution market	Collaborative lifestyle
Financial benefit	x	x	x
Social benefit			
Social recognition	x		
Socializing		x	x
Giving or gaining support		x	
Environmental benefit		x	
Functional benefit	x	x	x
Emotional benefit	x	x	x

Costs of Collaborative Consumption

Although collaborative consumption has many benefits, participants shared there were some costs (risks) associated with collaborative consumption that may deter consumers from engaging in such a practice. The costs involved with collaborative consumption included inherent risks in transactions (e.g., personal information and security/safety), product performance, and conflict or drama due to intense competition.

Risks during transactions. With any online interaction, it is significant for customers to carefully consider what they are buying, who they are they buying from, and how they are paying for their purchases. Several participants shared that in the beginning they had concerns about exposing personal information, the security of the website, and whether the merchandise would arrive as promised.

It's silly, but at first I was worried that they [other members of the website] would come and stalk me after getting my address. But, I've since lessened up on that fear. (Participant 22)

Especially in peer-to-peer transactions, users were likely to experience transaction problems. Participants indicated there were some cases in which users had to deal with untrustworthy people who carelessly used their personal information and there were instances in which some individuals never received the merchandise they had purchased.

I have known some moms that have had bad experiences with "crazy" people that do things like call their employers! I try to keep a lot of my personal information away from people I don't know. (Participant 14)

ThredUp had a numerous customer service problems. I had a box that was never returned to me, nor did the box ever make it to the mom who ordered it. (Participant 12)

One participant pointed out that there were some people taking advantage of other people's generosity. She noticed some users were reselling the swapped goods on eBay or other websites to make a profit and that some people were swapping as a business.

I do think it brought out some greediness from some. It sometimes felt like a free for all or like the same moms would always grab the good things. Some also took advantage of others' kindness and would try to resell the items they got for nothing or had swapped for. They made that swap into what it wasn't for. (Participant 13)

In the context of a collaborative lifestyle, Rabbits often needed to visit task poster's homes or their personal space to complete a task (e.g., doing laundry, cleaning) and there could be safety issues. Also, participants shared that sometimes the actual tasks were more difficult and burdensome than what had been described on the website. For example, Participant 27 did a home-cleaning task one time. She drove about an hour to the location and found that the work load was much more than what she had expected. She said she had no choice but to complete the task. To avoid any problems, participants indicated that they get very cautious in selecting tasks and tended to avoid direct contact with the task poster by choosing virtual tasks.

However, many participants shared that after the first few transactions and getting used to the service, they did not worry about the risk(s) of transactions. They used the word "trust" and noted that they generally trusted the people/business.

Honestly I don't really worry about anything bad happening. I am a very trusting person. ThredUp didn't bother me at all, make up a box, post the box, send it out. I could use ThredUp for the return address if I wanted. I only use paypal, I don't have to put my return address on the package. (Participant, 11)

Perhaps I am way too trusting, but I am not really worried about it. The only thing I worry about is whether they will like the package I sent! (Participant 21)

I guess I just don't worry about that, and I hope that TaskRabbit has checked them out enough. (Participant 28)

Product performance. Generally, clothing is considered to be a difficult product to be sold on the Internet because it has touch and color components that cannot be

consistently assessed. Fitting can also be an issue. Thus, some participants indicated they were worried about product quality, fit, and misrepresentation of offered merchandise. In the context of a product service system, there were some instances where participants experienced problems with design, fit, and quality of merchandise.

Received the dresses and they're stunning. Sad panda moment...the one had no chance of fitting over my curvy hips. (Participant 3)

What others seem to be complaining about is the poor upkeep of the dresses. One time, dresses I received were stained and completely worn out. The dresses were discolored and looked old. A lot of sequins were missing from one dress and someone must have busted out the zipper, because in its place was a giant industrial white zipper that looked ridiculous. I sent the dresses back the same day. (Participant 4)

As reflected in Participant 4's response, when a dress had been rented to many different people too many times, the quality of the dress deteriorated. There could be a risk of receiving poor quality merchandise if a renter decided to rent a popular dress.

Similarly, in the context of the redistribution market, some participants shared they worried about the quality and size of the swapped merchandise.

My biggest worry with swapping is quality. Someone not being forthcoming about an issue with the clothes.... (Participant 20)

However, many participants in the swapping context expressed they did not worry too much about the merchandise they received because the price they paid was only a few dollars and they could always pass it on to someone else.

I have experienced no worries. If something doesn't work out we just reswap it.

(Participant 10)

Conflict due to intense competition. Interestingly, in the context of swapping, some participants described the cost of conflict or drama among users. Conflict occurred because of intense competition among users or bad reviews. Participants made brief comments about the existence of conflict among mothers such as “sometimes lots of drama that comes along with having a lot of females” and they noted “fighting over bad reviews.”

Leaving bad reviews was a sensitive issue that could cause controversy among swapping mothers as reflected in Participant 12's comment. Participant 12 stated that she choose not to leave negative reviews online to avoid any possible conflict. Instead, she kept a list of people whom she should be aware of and tried not to swap with them.

I would not leave a bad review for several reasons. Being online is very public and I saw moms “gang up” on a mom for giving a bad review. And deceived right then and there I would not give a bad review. I didn't need the problems with giving a bad review. (Participant 12)

Criteria Used to Reduce Risk

Participants were asked to describe what criteria they used to reduce the risks associated with collaborative consumption. Participants shared that before any transaction with the collaborative consumption website, they examined the site and learned about the company's policies, security method, and customer service.

Usually I will lurk on the site for awhile before I post and/or buy to check out the mood. (Participant 17)

When it is done completely online, I definitely look for a site that has a secure method or some protection build in. Good customer service is definitely a must. If you can't meet the person face-to-face there is always risk. (Participant 15)

In addition, many participants depended heavily on word of mouth from their family and friends or reading reviews and other customers' experiences. They did this to determine whether the website or the person they wanted to share with was trustworthy. Followings are comments made by participants who participated in a redistribution market.

I will ask other mommies I am friends with on Facebook and my local friends if they have used the site and what they think. If we haven't heard of it, it's probably not good. (Participant 16)

First I always look them up and read reviews. Then I make my decision based on the reviews. With the person I am swapping with, I do the same thing. I will read their reviews and, as long as they are mostly good reviews, I will buy from them. If it is someone who doesn't have any, or has mostly bad ones, I don't take chances. (Participant 24)

Thus, as illustrated in Participant 24's comment, good reviews improved participants' trust about the website whereas negative reviews deterred participants.

Similarly, in the context of sharing skills, most participants checked the reviews of the task poster. Additionally, some participants shared that they looked at the details of

the task to see how clear the instructions were. If the instructions were vague and had many grammar errors, they passed up the task.

I usually read the task and check for poor grammar or serious spelling errors.

Being deliberately vague on details. (Participant 3)

Participants who rented online were primarily worried about product performance. To reduce this risk, participants looked at the reviews from previous renters, asked the RenttheRunway Stylists, or went to a local brick-and-mortar store to try on the dresses.

The reviews on the dresses are very helpful and if I am ever in a pinch I can chat with a specialist to help me make the best choice. (Participant 1)

While preparing for the wedding and the photo shoot, I tried on seriously like 100 dresses in all types, every possible lengths, different colors. Hence, I had somewhat of a good idea how dresses would look different on my body compared to the model that was wearing it [on the website]. (Participant 4)

Participants who engaged in swapping shared that they contact the sender to ask for specific descriptions and pictures of items.

I started using the Facebook wall for ThredUp, the personal connections do make a difference in the boxes. (Participant 12)

Several participants, however, indicated that they did not worry about security or other possible problems related to collaborative consumption. These participants expected collaborative consumption websites to have established policies and customer service to protect their customers.

ThredUp was fairly new [when she joined], I trusted that being a business they would have certain measures in place to protect members. Like banning people who were not swapping properly. (Participant 18)

I guess I just don't worry about that, and I hope that TaskRabbit has checked them [task posters] out enough. (Participant 29)

Meaning of Collaborative Consumption

Participants were asked to share what collaborative consumption meant to them. Meaning in this research was considered as consisting of the subjective thoughts and feelings participants associated with collaborative consumption. Six themes emerged from participants' responses and were labeled as economic value, fostering social responsibility, helping one another, removing clutter, a hobby, and freedom.

Economic value. For most participants, collaborative consumption meant they had a method to save or earn money. In their minds, collaborative consumption was about saving money on things they temporarily needed or was an alternative way to earn money for a short period of time. Participants in the product service system again reiterated that renting online conveyed getting access to designer dresses which they could not normally afford and would only be worn once or twice. Renting made possible for them to wear as many different dresses they would like for the same price they would pay for one designer dress.

Likewise, participants in the redistribution market shared that collaborative consumption meant saving money on things they need for much less than the original price and allowed them to have things that they could not normally afford or would not

buy if new. Participant 22 was a mother who was also a college student and she indicated that she normally shopped for her clothes at Kohl's, Old Navy, or Target. Her husband recently got hurt at work and it was important for her to save money for her family. But at the same time, she needed to provide the things her daughter needed. Swapping was a good solution for her because it helped her save money and also enabled her to acquire good quality things for her daughter.

It means saving money on really nice things that I/we need. I won't buy it unless we need it. The price of stuff isn't going to get cheaper and I can't afford to buy everything brand new. (Participant 22)

In the collaborative lifestyle context, collaborative consumption was an alternative and easy way to earn money.

I like making money doing simple tasks from the comfort of my own home in front of my TV, if I want. I may not be raking in the money, but that's up to me, based on my own schedule and if I like the sound of a job. (Participant 27)

As described earlier, on TaskRabbit, it was not difficult for Rabbits to get tasks. On average, participants did two to three tasks per day. The highest paid task was \$100 for 2 hours of work at a Wedding Expo. However, many participants shared that they were running tasks for the time being. For some participants, running tasks was just a temporary job to earn money until they got a full-time job.

Fostering social responsibility. Another emergent meaning of collaborative consumption was that it was a method to be socially responsible. Some participants in swapping context shared that they were concerned about the environment and desired to

live a socially responsible lifestyle. For them, swapping meant making their contribution to being socially responsible.

Means that I am being a responsible consumer and helping the world (in multiple ways). For me, it's pretty important. (Participant 14)

It means keeping the world just a little bit cleaner for the future. (Participant 19)

Especially, Participant 17 who worked in an environmental field described herself being all about reuse, recycle, and reduce.

I won't pay retail anymore for her clothes! Most of the clothes she [her daughter] wears were second hand. To me, that's important too. She doesn't need "new".

It's more ecologically sound to pass things on this way. (Participant 17)

Community/ helping one another. For some participants, collaborative consumption denoted helping one another as a community and a sense of joint ownership. In the redistribution market, participants pointed out that collaborative consumption was about being a part of an online community of people with similar interests and backgrounds who liked to help one another.

Lots of conversations, a good resource for moms, helpful. Swapping is only a small a part. Moms are really there for each other. (Participant 12)

I help contribute to an affordable shopping experience for moms that need it and I am able to purchase clothing from others as well. (Participant 14)

In addition, Participant 15 highlighted that collaborative consumption emphasized a sense of joint ownership. She shared that she always spends time trying to find

something used before she buys anything new. She also stated that she developed a habit of using things carefully so that she can pass them on to someone else after her use.

It means having a sense of joint ownership (even if there is only one “owner” at a time, knowing that goods can be passed on and caring for them in order to pass them on). I think when you have goods and you assume that someday you will pass them on (give away, sell, swap, whatever) it feels like there is a bigger meaning than just you, here, now. I think you can tell this is super important to me. (Participant 15)

Participants in the collaborative lifestyle also indicated sharing their skills denoted being able to help others in need.

It means helping people in my area and across the world with tasks they don't have time for or are not qualified to do (Participant 25)

It means an opportunity to share these skills with someone who has a need and is lacking those skills. I enjoy making people happy so if I can do that by helping them out, then I've fulfilled my duty (Participant 26)

Removing clutter. One participants in the redistribution market described collaborative consumption to be an opportunity to remove clutter from her house. By swapping, she was able to get rid of the things she did not need anymore.

Hobby. There were some participants who considered collaborative consumption a hobby. These participants were participants in the redistribution market and as illustrated in Participant 10's comment, swapping for them was a fun activity.

It gives me something to do that I like to do. It is kind of my hobby (Participant 10)

Freedom. One participant in the collaborative lifestyle shared that collaborative consumption meant freedom. She was able to choose among many different tasks and bid on them as she pleased. It was up to her to decide which task she would like to do, how much she would like to get paid for the task, and whether to do the task or not.

Freedom. I like that I choose the jobs I want, and they can be totally funky and fun sometimes. (Participant 27)

A summary of meanings of collaborative consumption that participants shared across three collaborative consumption systems is provided in Table 4.

Table 4

Summary of Meanings of Collaborative Consumption

Meanings of Collaborative Consumption	Product service system	Redistribution market	Collaborative lifestyle
Economic value	x	x	x
Fostering social responsibility		x	
Community/ helping one another		x	x
Removing clutter		x	
Hobby		x	
Freedom			x

Limitations on the Growth of Collaborative Consumption

In developing any business, there are barriers that need to be overcome. To understand these limitations in the view of consumers, participants were asked to reflect

on their experiences with collaborative consumption and share what limitations they think existed to the growth of collaborative consumption. There were limitations indicated by participants including consumers' resistance to collaborative consumption, un-sharable products, and lack of a business model.

In a product service system, participants' responses were mainly focused on the service. More specifically, participants talked about limitations in the quality control of rented dresses, reacting to unexpected delays in shipping due to late returns, or portraying the fit and size of dresses online. However, as reflected in Participant 1's comment, participants in this group were satisfied overall with the website, as they felt the managers of the business were doing their best to improve and meet their customers' expectations.

Even in the last year, they've improved their site tremendously! Adding more photos of "real" women in the dress, compared to only the model. That wasn't always available, even in 2011. (Participant 2)

Participants in the redistribution market expressed various opinions about the limitations of collaborative consumption including consumers' resistance, un-sharable product, and flaws in business model/service.

Consumers' resistance. Many participants questioned whether there are/will be enough consumers who are/will be interested in taking part in collaborative consumption. According to their experience, participants stated the limitation was people's acceptance of collaborative consumption. Participants have shared their collaborative consumption experiences with their family and friends but encountered resistance to the practice.

I've told most of my friends and family about it. They are resistant still. But some of them are the type of people that wouldn't set foot in a garage sale. Many of my friends just don't have the time. It does take a lot of time. They so far have not joined me! There will always be the people that shun the idea. The people that wear something once or twice and throw it away. (Participant 19)

As reflected in Participant 19's comments, resistance may be due to consumerism, that is, the fact that many consumers have become accustomed to buying things new and discarding them. Collaborative consumption requires a longer process than traditional consumption. Individuals have to search for items, contact posters, and receive the items which may take longer than traditional acquisition.

Also, I do think there are times when buying new is just less time consuming and more convenient. That will probably always be true, no matter how good we get at collaborative consumption. (Participant 15)

Another issue was the role of fashion as a child matured. As children get older it may be difficult for mothers to swap second hand clothing because children may refuse to wear used clothing. They may view it as out of fashion or as an unfashionable behavior.

Right now my son is 3 and could care less what he wears... but I imagine when he has more of an opinion, if someone offers something in his size, I'll see if he wants it! I think swapping wears off around size 5 or 6, in general. (Participant 21)

Un-sharable products. Another limitation to collaborative consumption was related to product itself. Participants thought that some products were not good for

sharing such as low quality items that were not sufficiently durable to share. Also noted was the ready availability of goods that can be easily purchased new.

There will always be things that are easier to buy new or do not last well enough to reuse. (Participant 15)

Business model/ service. One participant identified a possible flaw in the collaborative consumption system. She claimed that word-of-mouth (e.g., online review) was depended upon as a way to evaluate the trustworthiness of a person or a service. This method could be problematic because it could easily be exploited.

I would say customer service. You are depending on the word of someone you only “know” online. I see people complain about boxes and items that really have nothing wrong with them. The trust can be taken advantage of. (Participant 20)

A comment made by Participant 12 supports this claim by mentioning the existence of unfair or dishonest reviews. To the question “What limitations exist concerning the growth of collaborative consumption?” she responded as follows.

For ThredUp it was a bad review. Or more correctly an unfair bad review. (Participant 12)

At the time of data collection, ThredUp changed its business model to an online consignment store. Most of the participants were disappointed about the change and shared they stopped using the website and started to make their own swapping group on Facebook. One participant pointed out the limitation of collaborative consumption could be the fact that consumer themselves can develop their own collaborative consumption websites through Facebook.

There were myself and a couple of other moms looking into starting something like ThredUp was.....and that is another downfall for a company to be part of collaborative consumption.... I understood why ThredUp did what they did.

Moms were trying to help one another out and TU was just the middle man. Now we know we can do this without them. (Participant 13)

In the context of collaborative lifestyle, one participant indicated the limitation of a skill sharing business was the location boundary. Because most of the tasks (e.g., grocery shopping, delivery, furniture assembly) were done offline, he thought this business model could only work best in urban areas.

I think if it becomes too big it will lose some of the personal nature, which makes it so meaningful. I'm also not sure it can be functional in small towns/cities (25)

Changes in Views or Behaviors

Participants were asked whether there have been any changes in their views or behaviors after their participation in collaborative consumption. The majority of participants shared there were definite changes.

Well, I don't understand why I used to spend so much money when she needed new clothes. Or why others have not at least tried to do the same. I have started shopping smarter and really got to where I buy most of my "household" stuff only when I have coupons. They are my favorite thing to use. It's amazing at how much I've saved just by using coupons for those things. (Participant 22)

As illustrated in Participant 22's comment, there were changes in how participants shopped or consumed. After collaborative consumption experience, they

became “frugal” shoppers, interested in buying environmentally friendly or sustainable products, careful in using things, and willing to help others.

Participant 18 shared that after participating in collaborative consumption, she only buys new when items go on sale. She noted her past consumption practices were wasteful. Participant 24 went even further and commented that it was difficult for her to pay any retail price for an item even if it is on sale.

It very much has. Before ThredUp I bought everything new, when I outgrew it, it went in a box and was stored away. I think most consumers don't know about swapping and the benefits. I only now buy New for my daughter, in store when they have sales on. Like when the summer stuff goes on sale in time for winter. I think consumers can be quite wasteful. (Participant 18)

It is harder for me to pay retail prices now (even sale items) because I'm constantly comparing it to how much I could get for the same amount of money on a swap site. (Participant 24)

Interestingly, Participant 13 indicated that one of the criteria she used when buying something new was whether the product was swappable or not after use.

The funny thing is it's like sticker shock going into a store looking to buy something I know I can swap for..... I can't tell you how many times I've wanted something but didn't buy it because I could have one or two stuffed boxes full of things instead of just 1 shirt. (Participant 13)

Participants also shared that their interest in buying environmentally friendly or sustainable items has increased because of collaborative consumption. For example,

Participant 15 strived to consume in a socially responsible manner by researching sustainable retailers and buying from them.

Yeah, I think so. Even when I do buy new, I try to buy things that are environmentally friendly or sustainable. For example, my son is two and we are looking for a wooden play kitchen set for him. They are hard to find used around here (everyone buys new plastic ones), so we will probably buy it new, but I've been reading everything I can about which companies have the best practices and use the least toxic chemicals. Also, things like food... I am much more likely to shop at the farmer's market or the community-owned co-op than at the supermarket or the Wal-Mart. (Participant 15)

Similarly, Participant 23 noted her desire to buy sustainable products to swap. I'd say that I find myself buying things in stores that I think will hold up well so that I can swap them! I have also found that I've spent a lot less on clothing for my youngest son that I have in the past for babies/toddlers. (Participant 23)

Some participants considered buying new as an investment and carefully used the item so that it could be swapped after use. Thus, their intent to swap was present at the time of purchase.

If I do buy new I look at it as an investment... and we take care of our clothing and items better knowing one day someone else will have them. (Participant 13)

Participant 29 indicated that after her experience as a Rabbit she became more willing to help people than she was before. Getting used to doing tasks for others influenced her to be open to helping other people.

No change. There were several participants who indicated there were no changes in their views or behaviors. In the renting context, many participants shared that collaborative consumption was just another way for them to consume and was no different than shopping at any store online. In the swapping context, participants shared that there were no changes because they already had strong views about sharing and had been practicing collaborative consumption activities such as buying at consignment stores.

I wouldn't say it's changed my views...I already had pretty strong views about it!

But I would say I've been happy to find a place where I can find nice stuff and not feel like I'm being an over consumer! I am able to find stuff year round and not just wait those 2 times a year when the consignment sale comes around!

(Participant 17)

In the skill sharing context, most of the participants stated there was no change as reflected in Participant 25's comment.

I don't think so. I have certainly learned and developed certain skills, but it has not impacted my general views or behaviors (Participant 25)

Who are Collaborative Consumers?

I attempted to find distinct psychological characteristics of collaborative consumers. After analyzing the interviews, I found that when participants were talking about themselves, they used words such as "risk taker," "trusting," "generous and giving," and "frugal" frequently. For instance, Participant 1 described herself as a risk taker. She rented dresses online for her wedding by looking at the photos and reading descriptions on the website. She did not try on the dresses.

I'm a risk taker. I didn't even try the gown I wore for my wedding on until 2 days before. Luckily I'm pretty good at guessing my size by now (and what looks good) and they send a backup. (Participant 1)

Participants in the redistribution market considered themselves to be trusting, giving, or frugal people. Some participants stated that they trust the people they swap with as well as the people behind the collaborative website. They mentioned that in order to be involved in swapping, one must trust others. For them swapping mothers were like a group of women who were trying to help each other out.

I also asked about participants' opinion concerning consumerism and how they were different from people who only buy new. Participants in the redistribution market responded that they do not understand the people who only buy new. They thought only buying new was wasteful and society should learn that the new is not always good. They recognized the impact of consumerism on the environment and the society and they considered themselves being resourceful and contributing to the environment and the society by consuming collaboratively, that is, buying used. The comment made by Participant 17 best reflects this view.

I see many people be extremely wasteful with money. The economy isn't great right now, so collaborative consuming is a great way to stretch your dollar and make a little money. Society would also learn it isn't always about one's own ego. Helping someone by swapping is more rewarding than finding something for myself. I see a great deal of selfless people in my swap group. All that from collaborative consuming!! My opinion on only buying new... I think that is

ridiculous. I find only buying new is wasteful. It wastes money and it wastes our resources having to eliminate all the used items out there. (Participant 20)

Participant 17 blamed the media for encouraging consumerism and explained how she was never into material things.

Babies are so small and so expensive. I don't need a lot of "stuff." I didn't have a baby shower because I thought the idea of registering for "stuff" I knew I wouldn't need seemed crazy. I have never been someone that cares about material things. I think wedding showers and baby showers are just excuses for gifts now! You don't need all this stuff. People survive quite well without it! The consumerism in the US is out of control! The things the ads and media tell you "need" are crazy. I didn't get half of that stuff and I still had stuff I didn't need. (Participant 17)

Participants 15 and 16 shared how they were different from the people who only buy new. Contributing to the environment, the society, and helping others by swapping mattered to them.

People don't see the bigger picture of how new things impact the world. They are only thinking in the now and only about what is easy. Also, it often takes a lot more time and energy to find what you are looking for used. I try my hardest to buy things that are used. By buying used, at least theoretically, it cuts down on the number of new products being made and then overall economic and environmental impact that new things have on our planet and society. (Participant 15)

Even if I could afford to buy everything new, I would still be swapping because I am helping other mommies save money and the things I am swapping are getting a new home instead of going in the trash. (Participant 16)

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented nine major findings. Data from individual interviews and website observation revealed participants' experiences with collaborative consumption, their motivations, the perceived benefits and costs (risks) associated with collaborative consumption, criteria participants used to reduce these risks, meanings and limitations of collaborative consumption, changes in participants' views or behaviors after engagement in collaborative consumption, and insights to some of the characteristics of collaborative consumers. Extensive samples of quotations from participants were included in the report. By using participants' own words, the researcher represented the reality of the participants and the contexts studied.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore with a sample group of collaborative consumers their motivations, the benefits and costs they associated with collaborative consumption, and the meaning of practicing collaborative consumption to these consumers. This chapter provides a discussion of the findings, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this research, examining all three systems (product service system, redistribution market, collaborative lifestyle) of collaborative consumption (Botsman & Rogers, 2010), provided insights into online collaborative consumption. There were various types of motivation for participants to engage in collaborative consumption. Participants' primary motivation to collaboratively consume was economic, that is, to save/earn money and to gain economic value across all three systems of collaborative consumption. In the context of product service system, participants rented online to save money on dresses they needed for a short period time. In the context of redistribution market, participants were swapping to save money on their children's clothes that their children quickly outgrew. In the context of collaborative lifestyle, participants were doing tasks for strangers to earn money temporally when they were between jobs or before acquiring a full time job.

In all three collaborative contexts, the temporal duration of use of the products or skills they consumed, affected participants' decision to collaboratively consume. This finding was somewhat consistent with Moore and Taylor's (2009) finding that if the

duration of use of a product is expected to be short, consumers will likely rent the product. They explained this behavior as “getting your money’s worth” from a product. When a product is rented, consumers may think that they got their money’s worth even though they used the product for a short period time whereas consumers may think they will need additional time and use to get their money’s worth when a product is bought. Applying this claim to the context of a redistribution market, senders may engage in swapping to extend the time of use of their children’s clothing by passing them on to someone else. They were getting their money’s worth out of the purchase of clothing for their children by earning a small amount of money back as well as from knowing that the items will be used by others instead of going to a landfill. As a receiver of clothing from others, participants were getting their money’s worth by receiving a box full of children’s clothing and other “surprises” for which they paid a small amount.

For most of the participants in the redistribution market, there were multiple reasons for them to engage in collaborative consumption as compared to the other two contexts. The most prevalent motivation was social. Practicing collaborative consumption was a means to utilize the swapping website as a venue to exchange social support. As Hyde (1983) suggested, these consumers were driven to continue swapping to pay back the benefits they received from the online exchange. Coyne (2005) labeled this benefit as “altruism” because it enables the development of an Internet community of people interested in sharing, communicating, and giving to anyone who has access to the Internet. Participants were motivated to help similar others. They put in extra items in the box and included encouraging notes and messages to support like-minded mothers both tangibly

and intangibly. For these participants, swapping was a communal act of reciprocity.

Besides being a venue for social reciprocity, swapping enabled the ability to practice social responsibility and sustainable consumption. Participants were concerned about traditional ownership-based consumption which they thought was wasteful and had a negative effect on the environment. They considered collaborative consumption to be a socially responsible way of consuming that could contribute to the environment as well as to the quality of life of all participants. Their underutilized items were passed on to other people, and in return, they received things others did not need. Some participants stated that they had a strong preference to buy used goods because by doing so they could reduce waste and suppress material consumption.

Collaborative consumption was also motivated by particular personal needs. Renting allowed participants to get access to and experience high-end designer dresses that they normally could not afford to buy. To some extent, scarceness of an item generated participants' desire to rent. This finding supports Nunes, Drèze, and Han's (2011) proposition that consumer's desire to consume luxury items increases when the affordability of those items decreases. In addition, items with special or unique memories (stories) attracted some participants to swapping. Swapping mothers shared the stories behind their items on Facebook, for example, posting pictures of their children wearing the exact item and writing about how the item was used. This information from the seller made the sharing experience a meaningful interaction and facilitated the development of affective links with an item (Kopytoff, 1986).

For participants, collaborative consumption had a mixture of benefits and costs. Consistent with Albinsson and Perera's (2012) findings, one of the benefits of participating in collaborative consumption was developing relationships and socializing with like-minded strangers. A collaborative consumption website functioned as a social gathering venue where personal belongings were swapped between sellers and receivers. Swapping was not about making a profit but rather a socializing opportunity. Several participants noted they shared their worries and personal life events with these relative strangers and received emotional support from them in return.

For some participants, relationships formed online through their participation in collaborative consumption were not as sincere as were the relationships they formed in real life. Participants referred to the friends they made by swapping online as "virtual friends." They considered virtual friendships ones that could be easily broken. One participant mentioned that these virtual friends may be people she would never be friends with in "real life." She had "unfriended" (i.e., eliminated as a contact on Facebook) a couple of them because of what they posted online (e.g., rude comments).

Participants' also reported experiencing positive emotions including having fun and experiencing excitement when renting, swapping, and sharing their skills with others online. Emotional benefits were either centered on personal pleasure or social pleasure. The activity of collaborative consumption was fun and sometimes, addictive. Especially, participants in the swapping context claimed that they were constantly checking the website for new posts even when they were not interested in swapping because it was fun.

In addition, participants expressed the joy they received by helping others as well as receiving support or compliments from others.

There were several obstacles to collaborative consumption. As expected, participants shared their concerns regarding trust issues in an online transaction such as trusting the people/ service they transacted with and trusting that the product quality actually was as described. However, as they gained experience consuming collaboratively along with experiencing success in collaboratively consuming, they developed a level of trust in the people they interacted with and in the service in general.

In the peer-to-peer transactions, a collaborative consumption website played a role as a mediator between consumers and a safeguard that protected its members when something went awry. These websites offered multi-faceted reputation systems and customer services that provided information participants could use to form the basis for their trust. For example, they performed background checks of its members and provided personal references such as reviews and ratings that informed users who to trust, who to avoid, and also promoted trustworthy behavior.

Collaborative consumption relied heavily on online reputation (e.g., ratings, reciprocal reviews) to build trust among users. This strong dependence on reviews or ratings often caused controversy. Particularly in the swapping context, bad reviews left by receivers negatively influenced the sender's future exchange behavior. As most participants shared, users tended to avoid attempting an exchange with anyone who had received a negative review. As a result, people with negative reviews eventually were excluded from the community. This process becomes problematic when someone

received an unfair review. One participant shared that she often saw people complaining about items that had nothing wrong with them. Although this may be her personal opinion after looking at a review, an unfair review may exist especially when someone expected too much from swapped items. They simply are not the same as new. Giving bad reviews as a result of unrealistic expectations is unfair to the sender.

Some people were too picky...I never expected to get boxes of items that all would fit but as long as I was happy with most, it was all good. (Participant 17)

In addition, conflict among community members occurred when some people used the generosity of others for their own gain. Such situations easily developed within the context of swapping. For example, some participants reported that they noticed some individuals selling swapped items on other websites for more than what they cost to purchase. Such behavior caused concerns within the community as participants felt that their trust was violated. Participants undoubtedly expected that the items they sent would be used by the receivers. Violation of this expectation impacted participants' desire to continue engaging in collaborative consumption perhaps because they felt used or deceived. Perhaps to prevent these misunderstandings, it is important for the collaborative consumers to make explicit their expectations concerning the practice or to make it clear to participants that some people use the process to locate items to sell online.

In the context of product service system, maintenance of product quality was a challenge. Rented items were used intensively by many different people. Depending on the durability, items can and did wear out. Damaged items often lead to conflict. Also, many renters shared that the additional time and labor associated with rearranging orders,

pick-ups, and return of products to be burdensome compared to buying new. Therefore, collaborative consumption marketers in the product service system should make accurate suppositions around depreciation from deterioration and the cost of maintenance so that renters have realistic expectations. Also marketers should be prompt in reacting to problems such as replacing orders due to unanticipated product unavailability. One participant shared that her worst experience with the RenttheRunway (RTR) was when she was informed just two days before her event that her dress was not available. RTR tried to act quickly and replaced it with another dress without asking her preferences. She was not satisfied. She shared “It [replacement] was ugly! It was just not my taste!” Thus, efforts to learn about customers and understanding their preferences and tastes are critical to be able to successfully respond to situations like these.

Collaborative consumption held a range of meanings for participants from personal (e.g., removing clutter, freedom) to broader meanings including community building and fostering social responsibility. Participants initially viewed collaborative consumption to be a method to gain value by saving and earning money but soon their perspective broadened including this form of consumption to enable becoming part of a community, helping community members, and being socially responsible. Particularly for swapping mothers, collaborative consumption was not about profit but a way to contribute to society and to the environment.

For some participants, collaborative consumption also meant freedom. Collaborative consumption empowered participants and gave them the freedom to make use of skills and talents that they had not previously associated with opportunities to

make money. They were in control of their jobs. As Botsman (2010) indicated, it might be these types of empowered individuals that corporations need to compete with in the future.

Participants acknowledged that collaborative consumption was not for everyone. They had experienced resistance from family members and friends when they shared their collaborative consumption experiences. Perhaps some consumers find it difficult to accept collaborative consumption because they only know and are used to traditional ownership-based consumption. However, there are still people who may be interested in collaborative consumption but do not know about it yet. Although collaborative consumption has grown mainly through word-of-mouth, more aggressive promotions such as working with the government and design campaigns to alter wasteful consumption and inform consumers the benefits of consuming collaboratively may foster the growth of collaborative consumption.

For collaborative consumers, material ownership was not important. Especially in the swapping context, some participants claimed that they preferred to buy used and even when they buy things new, they carefully used the items so they can swap it after their use. Considering Belk's (1988, 2007) argument that people are reluctant to share and tend to retain a possession that they feel is a part of their extended self, it seems participants have weak or little self-attachments to the things they were willing to swap.

Some items participants swapped had stories or memories attached. Swappers included photos of their children wearing the items and shared special moments with the receiver. Having a story does not mean that an individual views the item as an aspect of

self or that the child made an attachment between the item and his or herself. It is also possible that there are a few items that are never swapped and a parent makes choices about what items to retain and which ones to swap. For example, when participants were asked whether there were things they had difficulty swapping, some mothers indicated that items that carried special memories such as newborn clothes their kids came home wearing from the hospital were hard to part with.

Parents may also dissolve the personal meaning through a cleaning process. Lastovicka and Fernandez (2005) noted that acts of cleaning may play a part in removing the personal meanings and attachments participants formed with items. For example, before these participants swapped any of the items they owned, they cleaned them, sometimes multiple times. Cleaning may help to remove any personal meanings attached to a specific item and facilitate letting it go.

Involvement in collaborative consumption impacted changes in views and behaviors. Participants noted they became sensitive to discounts and used coupons frequently. Even if an item was on sale, they had difficulty paying the sale price as they became comfortable with collaborative consumption. They also shared that their attitude relative to the environment (i.e., concern) had changed along with their behavior. They increased or shifted to buying environmentally friendly or sustainable products. Thus, practicing collaborative consumption promotes sustainability. Through participating in collaborative consumption, consumers are likely to gain some measure of psychological well-being by contributing to something positive in their communities, society, and to the

environment. One participant commented that she considers collaborative consumption to be a lifestyle that she will not give up rather than just an experience.

As stated previously, collaborative consumption can be placed on a continuum between two extreme ends - hyper-consumerism and anti-consumerism. The experiences of collaborative consumers within each of the three systems reflected some characteristics of both hyper-consumerism and anti-consumerism. For example, the product service system may actually fuel people's desire to consume more rather than consume less. Responses from participants using the product service system indicated one of the major benefits of this system was having access to various expensive dresses for a fraction of their original cost. This system not only makes items available to people who might not ordinarily be able to afford them but also makes consuming more items possible if only for a short period of time. Thus, it may actually fuel consumption. On the other hand, participants in the redistribution market found that this system reduced their consumption overall. Many participants self-identified as frugal and hesitant to buy new items.

There is a dark side to collaborative consumption. Besides the possibility of reducing taxable revenues, jobs, and the overall market for consumable goods, there are concerns with quality control. In addition, oligarchy may be reinforced, as privileged people who have the ability to build or fund resources to share and use in collaborative consumption marketplaces can continue to generate money while underprivileged people who could benefit from this practice may not have opportunity to participate (e.g., no access to the internet). In fact, traditional dominant corporations such as automobile

manufacturer (e.g., GM, BMW) have purchased car sharing programs, securing their place in the market.

Collaborative consumption is a small part of the economy but it is increasing. For collaborative consumption businesses, customer service is not only about responding to customers' complaints but also enabling customers to build reputations and establish communities. Many first generation collaborative consumption businesses have gone through difficult times overcoming barriers and adjusting to consumers' needs. For example, since the initiation of this research, ThredUp has changed their business model from a peer-to-peer swapping platform to a consignment platform. They changed to be able to financially continue as a business and to improve ease of use (Godelnik, 2013). With the change, ThredUp was able to solve or decrease problems such as quality control. They were able to reject stained or low-quality items sent by users. However, the community that was built by many mothers was lost. Most participants who were former users of ThredUp claimed they felt betrayed and disappointed by the fact that ThredUp elected a business model. It is difficult to assess whether the choices made were good or not but the fact that this early provider shifted to a business model revealed important challenges collaborative consumption businesses face – balancing the business and community component of a business operation.

Limitations and Future Research

Although valuable in-depth insights were obtained from this study, there were limitations that could be addressed in future research. Participants in this study were users of three different collaborative consumption websites: renttherunway.com, thredup.com,

and taskrabbit.com, each representing one of the three systems of collaborative consumption. My initial goal was to capture experiences in peer-to-peer settings. However, for the product service system, it was difficult to locate and contact individuals who rented apparel from another individual online. The fact that renters needed to return rented items to their original owners after use, there were risks involved such as renters not returning the item on time or costs generated by damages. Thus, only a few websites offered peer-to-peer rental service in the context of renting apparel products. With limited websites (NeighborGoods.net, I-Ella) available, I attempted to contact all the people (32 people) who posted their clothes or accessories for rent on the websites. However, no one replied or agreed to participate in an interview. Moreover, during the time of the data collection, NeighborGoods website was under construction. Therefore, I made a decision to collect data from RenttheRunway.com, a business-to-consumer rental service provider which is also a part of product service system.

Similarly, when recruiting participants in the collaborative lifestyle, I had difficulty recruiting individuals who posted tasks (Posters). It was almost impossible to contact the poster because the TaskRabbit website only allowed Rabbits to access poster's contact information. I tried different ways to contact posters by searching online reviews (e.g., yelp) that were written by posters. Eleven people were contacted but again I received no response to my request for an interview. Thus, only the experiences of Rabbits were documented in this research.

In addition, in the redistribution market, ThredUp changed its business model to an online consignment store in March 2012, right before my data collection. Although the

participants were asked to recall their experiences with ThredUp, it is possible that participants may have focused on sharing their most recent experiences with the swapping group on Facebook. Additionally, participants in this context were all mothers who were swapping children's clothes. Hence it may be difficult to argue that the research sample represents the range of participants in a redistribution market (e.g., people who swap adult clothes). Thus, caution must be exercised in applying these findings to other contexts.

Although conducting Skype interviews was an effective method to interview participants for this research, in person interviews may have evoked additional data (e.g., body language) as compared to interviews done via the internet. For example, interviewer may build rapport with an interviewee more quickly in person than online, enabling the interviewee to share his/her experience comfortably with the interviewer. I did attempt to contact potential participants near my physical location but again was unable to get anyone to consent to an interview.

With these limitations in mind, I recommend further research be conducted to continue to understand the processes and growth of collaborative consumption. Future researchers could investigate peer-to-peer rental contexts to see how the experiences, motivations, benefits, and costs are different to business-to-consumer rental context within the product service system. In the redistribution market context, a further similar study using the same criteria could be undertaken among adults who swap their clothes online to compare and contrast their experiences. In addition, it would be interesting to

gain task posters' perspectives on their experiences in getting help from Rabbits to complete their tasks.

This study focused on apparel related products or skills. Future research could be conducted with a range of products (e.g., cars, bikes, toys) and skills (e.g., cleaning, delivery) to assess the extent to which the same or similar findings would be uncovered. For example, renting or swapping electronic goods may be different than renting clothing online.

This research was conducted using a qualitative method which produced in-depth description of collaborative consumption. For future research, a quantitative study could further validate the findings. Through the findings of this research, a research model can be developed and tested. Probable psychological characteristics of collaborative consumers were identified in this study that could be tested in future research. For example, people who are risk takers (open to try new things), giving, less materialistic, have less attachment to products, and care about the community and the environment may be more likely to engage in collaborative consumption. Scarceness, durability, and duration of use of an item may also influence engagement in collaborative consumption.

Future researchers can also test factors that impact consumers' satisfaction with collaborative consumption. Participants in this study considered their collaborative consumption experience to be successful when they formed new relationships, received positive feedback (e.g., reviews, comments) from others, the product they received were higher value than what they paid for, and when they simply enjoyed the experience. Thus, it could be assumed that these factors will increase satisfaction with collaborative

consumption. In addition, perceived positive impact on the society and the environment may also encourage engagement in collaborative consumption and satisfaction.

As collaborative consumption markets grow, in addition to collaborative consumers, the attitudes and perceptions of non-collaborative consumers or even potential advocates of collaborative consumption needs to be considered. This information could evoke interest among collaborative consumption providers that are seeking means of improving their success in the market.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

I. What is your experience of collaborative consumption?

1. What is your history of collaborative consumption?
 - a. How many times have you collaboratively consumed? What collaborative consumption websites did you use?
 - b. How did you learn about collaborative consumption?
 - c. Which way did you participate in Collaborative consumption? As a “peer provider” (providing assets to rent, share, or borrow), “peer user” (consuming the available products and services), or both?
 - d. What products did you collaboratively consume or share? Why those products? Are some products difficult to share than others? Why?
2. What process do/did you go through as a peer user/ peer user (according to the answer of question 1-c.)?
 - a. If they participated in collaborative consumption as a “peer provider”
 - How did you advertise? What did you do to build trust?
 - b. If they had participated in collaborative consumption as a “peer user.”
 - How did you select the item you borrowed, swapped, or bought?
 - What did the seller/ renter/ peer provider do to make you choose them instead of others?
3. How did you feel after the transaction? Were you satisfied? Are you willing to continue participating in collaborative consumption?

More specific answers will be asked for the following questions.

II. What motivates/deters engagement in collaborative consumption?

1. Why do/did you engage in collaboratively consumption? Is it better to have access to products rather than to own them?
2. What contexts or situations have typically influenced your experiences of collaborative consumption?
3. What deters you to engage in collaborative consumption? What worries you?

III. What criteria do you use to assess the probable success of a specific collaborative consumption opportunity?

1. What criteria do you use to evaluate the trustworthiness of a collaborative consumption provider (website)?
2. Think about your unsuccessful collaborative consumption experience. What elements made it unsuccessful?
3. Think about your successful collaborative consumption experience. What elements made it successful?

IV. What does collaborative consumption mean to you? What does being a collaborative consumer mean to you?

1. What makes you different from those consumers who choose to buy only new things? What do you think they are concerned about?
2. How important is collaborative consumption to you? and to the society?
3. What do you gain from being a collaborative consumer?
4. What does society gain from collaborative consumers?

V. How has participation in collaborative consumption impacted your views or behaviors concerning consumption in general?

1. How has collaborative consumption changed your life or the way you do things?
2. How do you advocate for collaborative consumption?

VI. What limitations exist surrounding/ concerning the growth of collaborative consumption?

VII. Who are collaborative consumers?

1. How would you describe your personality to be?
2. Demographic characteristics
 - a. What year were you born in? _____
 - b. What is your marital status? _____

c. What ethnicity do you most identify with? _____

d. What is your education?

_____ Less than high school _____ University degree
_____ High school _____ Post graduate degree
_____ Some university/college

e. What is your occupation? _____

*** Closing Question: Please share with me now anything else you would like me to know about your experience of collaborative consumption.**

APPENDIX B
Recruitment Letter to Participants

Dear [potential participant],

I am a PhD student at the University of Minnesota who is interested in understanding the experiences and motivations that underlie participation in collaborative consumption. I would like to invite you to participate in an interview to share your specific experience with collaborative consumption.

The purpose of this study is to better understand individual's experiences of collaborative consumption. If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask questions about your motivations, how the experience has impacted your life and whether you changed any behaviors as a result of collaborative consumption.

You will receive \$25.00 as a thank you for your time and participation in the research once you have completed your participation in the research.

If you would like to participate in this study, please email me back with your name, phone number, and convenient date and time for an interview. If you have any question, feel free to contact me through email or by phone (651-757-5134).

It is important to know that this letter is not to tell you to join this study. It is your decision. Your participation is voluntary. Whether or not you participate in this study will have no effect on your relationship with the University of Minnesota.

You do not have to respond if you are not interested in this study. If you do not respond, no one will contact you. Thank you for your time and consideration.
I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Jung Mee Mun

University of Minnesota

APPENDIX C

Interview Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study designed to investigate your experience of “Collaborative consumption”. Collaborative consumption is a system of sharing, lending, renting, or swapping of goods and resources that is being reinvented as a result of the Internet. This study is being conducted by Jung Mee Mun, a doctoral candidate in the College of Design at the University of Minnesota. This study is a part of the requirement for the completion of a doctoral degree. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to better understand individual’s experiences of collaborative consumption. I will ask questions about your motivations, how the experience has impacted your life and whether you changed any behaviors as a result of collaborative consumption.

Procedures and Confidentiality:

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in a one-on-one interview. You will be asked a series of questions about your experiences of “Collaborative consumption”. Questions will address your motivation, behaviors, and thoughts regarding collaborative consumption. It will take about one hour to complete the interview.

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report that might be published or presented, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you as an individual participant. Your name will not be connected with your responses. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only the researcher will have access to the records.

Risks and Benefits:

This study has no risks. You will be given \$20 gift card for your participation at the conclusion of the interview. You will receive no personal benefit through participation in this study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota or the Department of Design, Housing, and Apparel. If you decide to participate you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships. You can also decline to answer any question during the interview.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now concerning the study. If you have questions later, you may contact the researchers at munxx010@umn.edu (651-757-5134) or kjohnson@umn.edu (612-624-3687). If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researchers, contact Research Subject Advocate line, 612-625-1650.

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers. I consent to participate in this study.

Signature_____ Date_____